

# WRIGHT

Consulting Services

## Gila County Public Policy Issues Survey Final Report

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## Introduction

This research report is based on 400 telephone interviews conducted with registered voters in Gila county, Arizona. Wright Consulting Services was retained by the Gila County Board of Supervisors to design, conduct and analyze the research. Interviews were conducted between June 19-26, 2006.

The purpose of the research was to determine how Gila county voters view the local public policy environment and issues in the county. This included comprehensive measurements of their views of county government, including various agencies, departments and individual members of the Board of Supervisors, their own personal situations, major issues in the county itself, how they respond to potential public policy initiatives involving county economic development, water supply and delivery, forest health and wildfire issues and their views of Gila Community College.

The interview for this project was designed by Wright Consulting Services with input from County Staff. The Board of Supervisors reviewed the questionnaire prior to field work.

The Gila County Recorder's Office provided the most up-to-date version of the county voter file, from which sample was drawn by us for the project. Potential respondents for the research were drawn by random selection method from this file. Selected records were then formatted for field research purposes.

All interviews in this project were conducted by professional survey research interviewers from a central location telephone facility where all interviewing was supervised by professional supervisory staff 100 percent of the time. Prior to data collection, interviewers were trained specifically on this interview protocol and each completed a set of practice interviews to ensure no administrative problems occur. None did. Only fully completed and supervisor-reviewed interviews were allowed to be included in the final dataset on this project.

Once the final dataset was in, Wright Consulting Services performed all validity and logic checks to ensure the data are clean and representative of the sample universe. They are. Given this, the margin of error of these data is +/- 5.0 percentage points at a 95% level of confidence. This means, 19 times out of 20, the numbers generated by these questions when asked of every single voter in Gila county will not vary from the numbers shown in this report by more than five percentage points.

This is the Volume 1 Report for this project. The actual interview used and a full set of crosstabulation tables for the project are included in Volume 2, Crosstabulations.

This report represents all of the findings germane to the research objectives of this project. If, however, additional data or interpretation are needed, we stand ready to provide them.

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## Executive Summary

The following details the major findings of this research. Each of the findings below is discussed in much greater detail in the body of this report. We strongly encourage the reader to read the report in its entirety to understand the details, subtleties and nuances of the findings summarized below.

There are six main areas of research discussed in this report:

1. The public policy environment in Gila county,
2. voter perspectives on Gila county's economy,
3. voter perspectives on forest health and wildfire issues,
4. voter perspectives on water supply and delivery issues,
5. voter perspectives on post-high school education issues,
6. and summary findings on issues in the county.

This Executive Summary summarizes the major findings in each of those areas.

1. Overall, we find the public policy environment in Gila county:
  - is somewhat unsettled but the foundations of it are strong.
  - A strong majority of voters are happy in their lives, have been and expect to remain so.
  - Most feel safe and secure but we are concerned significantly fewer expect to feel that way in the future.
  - Voters are split on the direction Gila county is headed, with equal numbers saying it is headed in the right direction versus is off on the wrong track. There is no real consensus among voters on this overall environmental measure.
  - However, we also find a significant gain of 12 percentage points in those saying the county is headed in the right direction compared to our numbers on this from 2002. Thus, voters are significantly more likely now to say the county is headed in the right direction than previously.
  - When asked top-of-mind what the most important issues facing their local area of the county are, voters most frequently cite crime, water, the local economy, forest fires and streets/highway improvements. In our experience, we often find the crime issue is one in the top five concerns. Importantly, water and forest fires are almost never found so prominent, thus indicating these issues are clearly important in voters' minds.
  - Consistent with Arizona and other jurisdictions where we've asked the question, voters in Gila county express a more neutral view of their confidence in county government to do what's best for voters. A plurality, 42%, are neutral, a fifth are positive and a third are negative. This indicates to us the need for more open, consistent and clear dialogue and communications between government and citizens.
  - In rating the job performance of most agencies and departments in county government and individual Supervisors, we find positive ratings outpace negative ones by margins of two to one or better. The Planning and Zoning Department is the only case where negatives outweigh positives.

- In most cases, though, we also find a significant percentage of voters are unsure how to rate county government agencies and departments and individual Supervisors. In short, this is another indication that dialogue and communications are needed so citizens are more informed and familiar with their government.
  - Strong majorities rate drought, wildfires and health insurance costs as major issues in the county. Substantial majorities rate improving post-high school education, resources for retirement, environmental health and the health of the county economy as major ones.
  - High levels of concern about drought remain from our 2002 research. Voter worries about this issue have not abated at all over the past four years.
  - High levels of concern about improving post-high school education and the health of the county economy have ebbed significantly during this time, dropping 10 points and 24 points, respectively. However, strong majorities continue to rate both as major issues in the county.
  - Thus, the data indicate to us the need for policy makers to understand the public policy environment is unsettled but positive and, further, that there is a need for consistent and clear communications between government and citizens to build the consensus necessary for moving forward on pressing public policy initiatives: drought/water and wildfires and, to a lesser extent, the county economy and post-high school education.
2. We find serious concerns about economic issues when they are probed deeply.
- Almost half of voters express little to no confidence in Gila county's current narrowly-based economic structure to serve the long-term interests of residents. Only a fifth say they are confident in it.
  - A strong majority believes the county economic structure should be broadened and they are supportive of encouraging new industries and businesses focused on local natural renewable resources.
  - A strong majority of voters say Gila County government should have a leading role in broadening the county economy and a majority support using taxpayers dollars to do it.
  - When given specific dollar cost to homeowners, support for county government using taxpayer dollars to broaden the economy drops to a slim majority, 53%. We note in the report such a drop is almost always the case when specific dollar costs to voters are attached to public policy proposals. Thus, the fact a majority continues to support this concept indicates the idea is resilient among voters and support may coalesce further around a more specific proposal with details and deliverables clearly communicated to voters.
3. Forest health and wildfire issues are of prime importance to voters and they are very supportive of public policy efforts to address them.
- Half of voters say outright the health of forests in the county is poor. Only a fifth believe the forests are healthy.
  - Voters acknowledge some degree of shared responsibility on forest health issues, citing the Forest Service, the community/everyone and 'government' most frequently as those responsible for the health of forests.

- A clear majority believes improving the health of the forests in the county is an achievable goal. Less than a fifth do not.
  - Of great importance is the fact that fully three-quarters of voters say their *local* area of the county is vulnerable to wildfires. Only ten percent believe their area is not.
  - Voters are split on whether three general actions addressing wildfire concerns will actually occur in the next few years. Less than half believe homeowners engaging in private property clean up and establishment of a fire safety perimeter will occur and fewer still believe the federal government will thin trees and remove forest debris or that it will construct fire breaks around local communities. Clearly, voters are skeptical that actions by others will occur to address wildfire issues.
  - Fully 80 percent of voters support Gila County government taking a leading role on forest health and wildfire issues. Support does not drop below two-thirds among any voter group.
  - Almost 60 percent believe local efforts addressing wildfire issues will likely result in additional funding from state and federal governments once the commitment by locals is made manifest.
  - Almost two-thirds support paying an additional \$25 per year in property taxes to fund forest health and wildfire remediation efforts by Gila County government. Noted before, support for public policy initiatives almost always drops when dollar costs are associated with them so to find two-thirds supportive given the costs indicates a real and profound desire by voters for these efforts to occur.
4. Water supply and delivery issues are also of high importance to voters, they believe an integrated approach among communities is the best way to address the problems and they support public policy efforts in this regard.
- Half of voters express concern over availability of adequate drinking water over the long-term. Less than a third are not concerned.
  - Voters most frequently say governments, including local and state, are best-suited to address long-term water issues. Few believe water is best addressed by individuals or individual communities. Further, when probed specifically, well over half say multiple communities with an integrated approach to water issues is the best route to addressing long-term water problems.
  - Fully 70 percent of voters support Gila county taking a leading role on long-term water supply and delivery issues. Further, almost three-quarters support establishment of regional water authorities, as in Southern and Northern Gila county, to be tasked specifically with developing and delivering water locally over the long-term.
  - Given the \$25 per year cost to homeowners of creating regional water authorities, we find support for the initiative remains well above the majority mark, at 59%. This indicates another public policy initiative that is clearly supported by voters and, when more specifics and details of actions and deliverables are communicated, we suspect support for it will solidify further.
5. Post-high school education is a key issue among voters, they are generally positive concerning Gila Community College (GCC) and support its curriculum. However, the

findings also indicate voters believe there is room for improvement at the college, particularly in the job it does serving the needs of county residents.

- We first asked voters to rate the quality of education the public schools provide Gila county students and find positive evaluations outpace negative ones by a two to one ratio. Further, positive ratings have increased by five points since 2002. However, less than a majority are positive in their ratings.
  - About the same percentage, 38%, are positive in their ratings of the quality of community college education Gila county students receive and we find those positives outpace negatives by more than three to one. We note, though, that fully a third of voters are unsure how to rate this issue and we indicate this shows the need for more communications and involvement of the college with the public. Of additional concern is the fact that positive ratings on this issue have declined significantly since 2002.
  - We again find positive, albeit not strongly so, numbers on the issue of GCC's job performance in serving the needs of Gila county residents. Less than a majority, 41%, are positive while only 13% percent are negative. This is strong three to one ratio of positives to negatives. However, almost half (46%) either rate the college in mediocre terms or are unsure. Granted they have a positive foundation built, such findings also indicate a real need for the college to involve and embed itself more among the public in order for voters to get a clearer picture of the college and its services.
  - Voters are strongly supportive of various types of classes and services offered by the college. The strongest numbers are found for providing advanced technology training, providing the skills necessary for young people to get jobs locally, preparing students to work in specialized trades and retraining workers in declining industries for new jobs and careers. Positive, though less strong, numbers are found for offering free classes to residents age 55 and over and teaching recreational and leisure subjects.
  - In testing head-to-head two general foci of the college's curriculum, we find, in the first test, voters say it should focus on academics and on occupational/technical training. About a fifth choose academics over occupational/technical, 40 percent choose occupational/technical over academics, but a third choose both. In short, the consensus appears to be both types of foci are where the most support on the GCC curriculum lies.
  - When testing academics versus recreational/leisure foci, we find academics is the clear preference of voters. Over two-thirds prefer it while only a few prefer recreational/leisure. Further, less than a fifth say both in this head-to-head test.
  - When asked directly if GCC should offer free classes and tuition for residents age 55 and over, those saying it should outpace those who disagree by two to one. Voters clearly believe GCC should offer such an option for older residents.
6. Finally, we tested two summary issues in the county. The first was to provide voters a full picture of the impact of property taxes given the three public policy initiatives in the research and the second was to get an idea of how voters feel county government services in their local area compares to other areas of the county.
- In testing the summary impact of the three initiatives, we asked voters if they support or oppose paying \$75 per year in additional property taxes for these three initiatives. A clear indication that voter support of them is resilient is the fact that support in this measure

outpaces opposition by two to one, or 62% vs. 32%. Further indicating resiliency is that support remains above the 55 percent mark in 19 out of 24 voter groups in the data.

- Finally, perhaps not surprisingly, we find a plurality of voters believe their local area receives less services and benefits from county government than others. Interestingly, though, almost as many say their area receives the same benefits and services.



### The Public Policy Environment in Gila County

The first key area of the research involved assessing the *general public policy environment in the county* as perceived by voters. This assessment included gathering data on personal situations, such as personal happiness and personal safety and security, how voters perceive the general direction Gila County is headed, voters' top-of-mind perceptions of local area issues, their general confidence in Gila County government to do what's best for residents and their ratings of job performance of various county government agencies, departments and including the individual members of the Board of Supervisors. In addition, we gathered data on specific public policy issues, asking voters to rate the degree to which they see them as major issues, minor ones or not issues at all. The following series of tables show how county voters respond to these measures of the public policy environment.

#### Happiness Indicators

The first table in this series, personal happiness, is shown on the next page. In it, we find about two-thirds (64%) of voters say they are happy in their personal lives these days. The table further shows a similar percentage indicating they were happy five years ago and also about the same percentage saying they expect to be happy five years from now. Thus, personal happiness is found at consistent levels on these measures, indicating stability across time among voters on this key issue. In short, Gila county voters have been happy in their personal lives, are now and, importantly, expect to be happy in the future.

The detailed data indicate there are some groups more likely to be happy than others. Current happiness peaks among registered Independents, those most affluent, middle age voters and those employed in full time jobs. Current happiness is less pronounced among low income voters, retirees and renters.

The column in the table labeled 'net happiness' is an important one because it shows the net change in expectations of happiness from the past to the future. In that column, we find expectations of future happiness are highest among Republicans, middle income voters, younger and middle age voters, voters currently employed and those who rent their homes. Significantly lower levels of expected happiness are found among the county's oldest age group and retirees.

Thus, on the key issue of personal happiness, we find Gila county voters generally are happy people and they expect to be happy in the future. Such perceptions peak among key voter groups, including younger and middle income voters, thereby emphasizing their expectations that life not far down the road in Gila county will be better than today. In short, policy makers in the county should take into account the fact that rising expectations among most voters, and particular groups, will create pressures on them to meet those expectations in the near term. Additionally, lower expectations of future happiness, particularly among older voters and retirees, may also add to the pressures policy makers feel regarding key issues the county faces.

Happiness Indicators

	<i>Happy 5 years ago</i>	<i>Happy now</i>	<i>Happy 5 years from now</i>	<i>Past-Future net happiness</i>
<b>Gila county</b>	65%	64%	68%	+3 pts.
<b>Southern Gila</b>	63	64	65	+2
<b>Northern Gila</b>	67	64	70	+3
<b>Democrat</b>	66	62	65	-1
<b>Republican</b>	62	62	70	+8
<b>Indep./Other</b>	66	69	73	+6
<b>Male</b>	66	68	68	+2
<b>Female</b>	65	60	68	+3
<b>Anglo/Caucasian</b>	67	64	70	+3
<b>Minority</b>	55	60	60	+5
<b>Under \$25K</b>	59	49	58	-1
<b>\$25K to \$49.9K</b>	67	67	75	+8
<b>\$50K and over</b>	73	71	78	+5
<b>Under 35 yrs. of age</b>	66	61	80	+14
<b>35 to 55 yrs. of age</b>	64	71	73	+9
<b>56 to 65 yrs. of age</b>	62	62	66	+4
<b>Over 65 yrs. of age</b>	68	60	55	-13
<b>Employed full time</b>	66	73	81	+15
<b>Employed part time</b>	59	65	78	+17
<b>Retired</b>	65	58	57	-8
<b>Other</b>	62	53	64	+2
<b>Own home</b>	67	65	67	0
<b>Rent home</b>	60	57	76	+16
<b>Attended GCC</b>	66	68	70	+4
<b>Not attended GCC</b>	64	61	68	+4

### Personal Safety/Security Indicators

The next table in this series shows how Gila county voters perceive their own personal safety and security over time. In the table we find over 70% say they feel safe and secure now while three-quarters felt safe and secure five years ago. Importantly, only two-thirds expect to feel safe and secure five years from now. Granted the vast majority of voters in Gila do feel safe and secure, and expect to feel that way in the future, it is important to note their overall view: *significantly fewer voters expect to feel safe and secure in the future*. This finding alone has implications for policy makers and the environment in which they operate.

The table also shows detailed voter group data on the personal safety-security issue. In it we find feelings of current safety and security peak among voters in Northern Gila county, Republicans and those most affluent while it is voters in Southern Gila, Democrats, minority voters, some older voters, part-time employees and those involved in ‘other’ types of work (e.g., home maker, student, etc.) who are least likely to feel safe and secure.

The net safety column of the table clearly shows the important finding noted above: significantly fewer voters expect to feel safe and secure in the future than have in the past. This trend is important because it indicates increasing concern among voters on such a critical dimension of life as personal safety. The column shows this feeling peaks among older voters but, importantly, significantly lower expectations of safety and security are found among most voter groups, albeit, at less pronounced levels. These include all voter groups with the exceptions of Independents and part-time employees.

In sum, then, on the dimensions of happiness and personal safety/security, we find Gila county voters generally are happy, and expect to remain so, but they also exhibit a real concern about personal safety and security in the future. *Thus, the implications of the dynamic of these two measures puts policy makers in a bind: maintaining an environment where voters can remain happy while dealing with fundamental, and increasing, concerns of personal safety and security.*

Personal Safety/Security Indicators

	<i>Safe/Secure 5 years ago</i>	<i>Safe/Secure Now</i>	<i>Safe/Secure 5 years from now</i>	<i>Past-Future net safety</i>
<b>Gila county</b>	75%	72%	65%	-10 pts.
<b>Southern Gila</b>	74	65	62	-12
<b>Northern Gila</b>	75	78	67	-8
<b>Democrat</b>	75	66	61	-14
<b>Republican</b>	79	77	67	-12
<b>Indep./Other</b>	70	76	69	-1
<b>Male</b>	76	74	65	-11
<b>Female</b>	74	69	65	-9
<b>Anglo/Caucasian</b>	77	74	67	-10
<b>Minority</b>	60	62	52	-8
<b>Under \$25K</b>	66	70	58	-8
<b>\$25K to \$49.9K</b>	80	70	70	-10
<b>\$50K and over</b>	80	77	70	-10
<b>Under 35 yrs. of age</b>	74	68	83	+9
<b>35 to 55 yrs. of age</b>	75	76	66	-9
<b>56 to 65 yrs. of age</b>	74	67	66	-8
<b>Over 65 yrs. of age</b>	74	71	52	-22
<b>Employed full time</b>	84	76	74	-10
<b>Employed part time</b>	67	67	64	-3
<b>Retired</b>	70	72	58	-12
<b>Other</b>	65	61	58	-7
<b>Own home</b>	76	72	62	-14
<b>Rent home</b>	71	72	83	+12
<b>Attended GCC</b>	75	71	67	-8
<b>Not attended GCC</b>	74	73	64	-10

### Direction Gila County is Headed

The next key issue in assessing the public policy environment in Gila county was to determine whether voters believe the county is headed in the right direction or is off on the wrong track. This measure, commonly called ‘right direction’, is used extensively in survey research as a general indicator of the political and public policy environment. The Gila county data on this are shown in the table on the next page.

We find in the table the county’s voters are split on this issue, with about 40% saying it is headed in the right direction and about the same percentage saying it is headed off on the wrong track. Another one in six is unsure.

The detailed data show the split on this issue is found to varying degrees consistently among most all voter groups. Thus, there is no real consensus among voters, either way, on the county’s direction. *This is important by itself in that it indicates to policy makers that there is a strong need for consensus among the body politic, even in a most basic sense as shown by this general environmental measure.* This issue is one we will discuss throughout the report, as it is indicated by other data, too, and it is fundamental to moving forward on public policies that benefit the county and its residents.

The table also shows that full-time employees are most likely to say the county is headed in the right direction while those in Southern Gila, women, minority voters, younger voters, those in the ‘other’ employment category, renters and those who have attended Gila Community College (GCC) are most likely to say it is headed off on the wrong track.

Finally, and very importantly, the table shows Gila county voters are more likely to say the county is headed in the right direction than they were four years ago. Thus, we record a 12-point gain in right direction since 2002. This gain is most pronounced among Independents, middle income voters, younger and middle age ones, those employed and those in the ‘other’ employment category.

In sum, this measure is yielding much key information for policy makers. Voters are split on the direction of the county but significantly more say it is headed in the right direction than in the past. Thus, while the split exists, and there are key implications of this as discussed above, the improvement in this measure since 2002 is also very encouraging.

Direction Gila County is Headed

	<i>Right Direction</i>	<i>Wrong Track</i>	<i>Not Sure</i>	<i>2002-2006 Chg. in Right Direction</i>
<b>Gila county</b>	42%	43%	15%	+12 pts.
<b>Southern Gila</b>	39	51	10	+12
<b>Northern Gila</b>	45	36	19	+11
<b>Democrat</b>	43	45	12	+11
<b>Republican</b>	41	41	18	+11
<b>Indep./Other</b>	45	42	13	+17
<b>Male</b>	44	40	16	+15
<b>Female</b>	40	47	13	+7
<b>Anglo/Caucasian</b>	42	42	16	+12
<b>Minority</b>	42	48	10	+11
<b>Under \$25K</b>	37	46	17	+2
<b>\$25K to \$49.9K</b>	44	45	11	+18
<b>\$50K and over</b>	46	40	14	+12
<b>Under 35 yrs. of age</b>	41	58	1	+25
<b>35 to 55 yrs. of age</b>	46	40	14	+21
<b>56 to 65 yrs. of age</b>	37	47	16	+2
<b>Over 65 yrs. of age</b>	42	37	22	+6
<b>Employed full time</b>	49	44	7	+23
<b>Employed part time</b>	42	39	19	+17
<b>Retired</b>	38	40	22	0
<b>Other</b>	35	54	11	+19
<b>Own home</b>	40	43	17	N/A
<b>Rent home</b>	47	50	3	N/A
<b>Attended GCC</b>	37	51	12	+8
<b>Not attended GCC</b>	47	36	17	+14

### Top-of-Mind Issues in Gila County

In assessing the public policy environment, we wanted to ensure voters had the opportunity to speak clearly, frankly and fully about the issues facing residents in their part of the county. This was done in order to ‘throw the widest possible net’ in getting their input. The question was posed in a way allowing them to discuss the issues in their own words. We asked them what is called an open-end question, that is, what are the one or two *most important issues facing residents in their local area*. We did this so they could simply talk to us about anything at all they deem important.

Their responses are shown in the table on the next two pages. Their verbatim comments have been reduced into numerical categories so the data can be analyzed. As shown in the table by cumulative percent, the five main issue areas of voters’ top-of-mind responses include: crime and law enforcement, water issues, economic issues, perceptions of county government and services and environmental concerns.

More specifically, the crime area includes comments about drugs and drug problems, crime, theft, the need for more law enforcement officers and deputies, the problem with illegal immigrants and general comments about personal safety. The crime area and such comments regularly are found to top the list of voter concerns in most surveys we and others have done. Thus, these findings are not surprising to us, given previous work.

Importantly, the water area includes a third of all respondents who simply say they, locally, do not have enough water. *This is the single most frequent response among voters in Gila county and is a powerful indicator of how very important and top-of-mind this issue is.*

The next major area, economic issues, includes concerns about the local economy, that there are not enough jobs and that there is a need for more businesses locally. They also note concerns about the cost of living, affordable housing, the cost of utilities and gas prices in this issue area.

Foremost among comments about county government is the need for street and highway improvements. This, far and away, is the primary focus of comments in this issue area. A few voters worry about corruption and/or ignorance in government, others indicate building permits and codes, spending, neighborhood/local blight and such are of concern.

The worry about wildfires and forest fires dominates the environmental issues category. Again, *the sheer number of comments on this specific issue is a powerful indicator of the real and widespread concern voters have on it.*

Issue areas where much less-frequent comments were recorded include taxes, growth and development, education, health and health care and assorted other low incidence comments.

Finally, we note the three most-frequent specific comments say a lot about what Gila county voters are most concerned about. Shown in the table, we find those ‘top three’ are: not enough water (33%), forest fires (16%) and the economy (16%).

Overall then, this open-end question indicates voters are keyed in to major public policy areas, most importantly, crime, water, the economy and wildfires. Much of the remainder of this report delves into several of these areas in-depth so policy makers can understand more of what voters think about them, what should be done and what policies they, the voters, are willing to support.



Top-of-Mind Issues in Gila County

	<i>Percent of Respondents</i>
• Crime, law enforcement issues (cumulative %)	(37%)
• Drugs	12
• Crime, theft	9
• Need more law enforcement, police, deputies	6
• Illegal aliens, securing borders	6
• Safety, in general	4
• Water-specific issues (cumulative %)	(34%)
• Not enough water	33%
• Flooding, washes	1
• Economic issues (cumulative %)	(26%)
• Economy, not enough jobs, more businesses	16
• Cost of living, affordable housing	8
• Cost of utilities	1
• Gas prices	1
• County government services, perceptions (cum. %)	(20%)
• Street, highway improvements	12
• Government corruption, ignorance	4
• Building codes and permits	1
• Government spending, wasting money	1
• Junk, trash in neighborhoods	1
• Restoration of county	1
• Environmental issues (cumulative %)	(18%)
• Forest fires	16
• Protect environment, land, resources	2
• Tax-specific issues (cumulative %)	(7%)
• Taxes, in general	5
• Property taxes too high	2

(Table continued on next page)

Top-of-Mind Issues in Gila County, continued

	<i>Percent of Respondents</i>
• Growth, development (cumulative %)	(7%)
• Growth, development	7
• Education issues (cumulative %)	(6%)
• Improve education	6
• Health, health care (cumulative %)	(5%)
• Health care, doctors, hospitals	5
• Other comments (cumulative %)	(8%)
• Activities for youth, families, seniors	3
• None, happy where I live	2
• Copper mines	1
• Smoking laws, leave up to businesses	1
• Lack of representation in Legislature	1
• Miscellaneous (frequency less than 1% each)	8
• Don't know	3

### Confidence in Gila County Government

The next dimension of assessing the public policy environment in Gila county is that of confidence in the government to do what's best for residents of the county. Those data are shown in the table on the next page.

In it we find only a fifth of voters say they're confident in county government to do what's best for residents while a plurality, 42%, are neutral and over a third are negative in their view of this issue.

The detailed data indicate confidence in government peaks among men and minorities while no confidence peaks among Republicans, younger voters, those employed part time and those in the other employment category. Neutral ratings on this issue peak among those most affluent.

We have asked this question nationally, in Arizona statewide and among several other local jurisdictions. These findings are generally consistent with what we have found in those other instances. In short, low levels of confidence in most governments these days are the norm, not the exception. Thus, these data in Gila county indicate skepticism of governments is found here, as in other places.

While consistently low percentages of those confident in government is the norm, it also points out, clearly in our view, the need for more and better communication between county government and citizens. The reader will recall we mentioned the consensus issue earlier, in the right direction/wrong track discussion. These data, in our view, strongly support that conclusion and extend it further to show the lack of confidence in county government is also a likely by-product of the lack of general consensus.

In short, the confidence data are not surprising to us at all. And we view the findings on them less from a negative perspective as from one of *supporting the need for open, consistent and clear communications from a government to its citizens*. That, we believe, is the most important aspect of the confidence data and findings.

Confidence in Gila County Government

	<i>Confident</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Not Confident</i>
<b>Gila county</b>	20%	42%	38%
<b>Southern Gila</b>	24	37	39
<b>Northern Gila</b>	17	46	37
<b>Democrat</b>	24	42	34
<b>Republican</b>	17	39	44
<b>Indep./Other</b>	17	45	38
<b>Male</b>	25	41	34
<b>Female</b>	15	43	42
<b>Anglo/Caucasian</b>	18	42	40
<b>Minority</b>	30	39	31
<b>Under \$25K</b>	24	39	37
<b>\$25K to \$49.9K</b>	21	38	41
<b>\$50K and over</b>	16	47	37
<b>Under 35 yrs. of age</b>	14	42	44
<b>35 to 55 yrs. of age</b>	20	44	36
<b>56 to 65 yrs. of age</b>	20	38	42
<b>Over 65 yrs. of age</b>	24	42	34
<b>Employed full time</b>	21	46	33
<b>Employed part time</b>	15	30	55
<b>Retired</b>	22	40	38
<b>Other</b>	17	40	43
<b>Own home</b>	20	42	38
<b>Rent home</b>	19	40	41
<b>Attended GCC</b>	20	39	41
<b>Not attended GCC</b>	22	43	35

Job Performance of Key Gila County Departments, Leaders

The next aspect of assessing the public policy environment was to ask voters to ‘grade’ the job performance of various agencies, departments and even the individual Board of Supervisors members. This part of the assessment was done to determine if there were any major ‘red flags’ in county government operations, even specific departments. By asking voters to provide job performance ratings, as an employer would with an employee, we are obtaining data that go straight to the heart of government’s purpose: does it work?

The table on the next page shows Gila county voters say ‘Yes’ to that question among most all agencies, departments and all Supervisors. In each case, positive evaluations (i.e., ‘excellent’ and ‘good’) outweigh negative ones (‘poor’ and ‘very poor’) by wide margins, often in excess of a three to one ratio. Further, in almost all cases, average job performance ratings (i.e., ‘fair’) are found at about the 25 percent mark, give or take a few points.

Thus, these are very strong findings relative to county government operations, generally speaking. The only department where the job performance data are negative is the Planning and Zoning department. In that case, negatives outweigh positives by almost two to one.

Further, specifically regarding individual Supervisors, we find the same pattern of response among all three: positives outweigh negatives by about three to one. However, for all three, we also find close to a majority of voters are unsure how to rate them. This, in our view, is another clear indicator of the need for more, much more, communications between government and citizens, particularly from Supervisors, as these data show.

Job Performance of Key Gila County Departments, Leaders

	<i>Excellent/ Good</i>	<i>Fair</i>	<i>Poor/ Very Poor</i>	<i>Not Sure</i>
<b>Gila County Recorder's Office</b>	53%	17%	6%	24%
<b>Gila County Sheriff's Office</b>	49	25	16	10
<b>Gila County Health Department</b>	46	21	8	25
<b>Gila County Community College</b>	42	20	17	21
<b>Gila County Assessor's Office</b>	38	27	13	22
<b>Gila County Attorney's Office</b>	37	23	11	29
<b>Gila County Superior Court</b>	35	27	12	25
<b>Gila County Public Works Department</b>	32	30	13	25
<b>County Supervisor Shirley Dawson</b>	28	18	9	45
<b>County Supervisor Tommie Cline-Martin</b>	27	19	7	47
<b>County Supervisor Jose Sanchez</b>	23	19	8	50
<b>Gila County Planning and Zoning Dept.</b>	19	23	35	23

(Detailed data for each are available in the Volume 2 Crosstabs)

### Public Policy Issue Areas in Gila County

The final part of assessing the public policy environment was to ask voters to rate whether specific public policy areas are major issues, minor ones or not issues at all in their view. The data on these measures are shown in the table on the next page and detailed data on four of them, drought, wildfires, post-high school education and the county economy, are shown following.

The table shows voters in the county clearly and strongly indicate they view several of the public policy areas tested as major issues. Over 80 percent of voters say drought, the threat of wildfires and the rising cost of health insurance and prescription drugs are major issues. Over 60 percent say improving post-high school education, having enough money and resources to live comfortably in retirement, the declining health of the environment and the health of the county economy are major issues.

Only two areas, too little growth and development and job layoffs and cutbacks, are not viewed as major issues by a majority of voters.

These data make it clear that voters are concerned, to a substantial degree, about a plethora of issues facing the county and its citizens. The tables following show the detailed data on four key areas investigated more fully in this research: drought, wildfires, post-high school education and the county economy.

Public Policy Issue Areas in Gila County

	<i>Major Issue</i>	<i>Minor Issue</i>	<i>Not an Issue</i>	<i>Not Sure</i>	<i>2002-2006 chg. in Major Issue</i>
<b>The effects of prolonged drought and lack of rain.</b>	89%	5%	3%	3%	-1 pt.
<b>The threat of wildfires in your area of the county.</b>	84	11	5	0	N/A
<b>The rising costs of health insurance and prescription drugs.</b>	83	9	5	3	-5
<b>Improving post-high school education in Gila county.</b>	64	22	8	6	-10
<b>Having enough money and resources to live comfortably in retirement.</b>	64	19	14	3	-5
<b>The declining health of the environment, including the air, water and land.</b>	63	25	14	3	+2
<b>The health of Gila county's economy.</b>	61	22	9	8	-24
<b>Too little growth and development in your area of the county.</b>	40	29	28	3	-13
<b>Job layoffs and cutbacks in your area of the county.</b>	35	27	22	16	-35

(Detailed data for key issues follows, with data available for each individual issue in Volume 2 Crosstabs)



Detail: Effects of Prolonged Drought and Lack of Rain

The next table shows detailed data on voter perceptions of the effects of prolonged drought and lack of rain as a public policy issue. Noted previously, a strong majority, 89%, of voters rate this issue as a major one in the county.

The table shows very strong majorities, two-thirds and more, of *every single voter group* rate this issue as a major one in Gila county. Further, we find ratings peak among voters in Northern Gila, among Republicans, older voters and retirees.

Lower concern, albeit still strong majorities, about drought are found among voters in Southern Gila, Independents, minority voters, younger ones and part-time employees.

The column in the table labeled '2002-2006 chg. in Major Issue' shows drought is, and has been for at least four years, a major concern of voters in the county. It's importance as a major issue has not changed significantly since 2002, dropping by only one point. The detailed data show some movement on this issue among some groups but, importantly, strong majorities of all have seen and continue to see this as a major issue.

These data unambiguously show voters in Gila county believe the issue of drought is, indeed, a major one. The fact strong majorities of every voter group agree on this is evident in the table. That they have viewed this as a major issue over time is very important. From a policy perspective, this issue is one of clear importance for policy makers to address. Additionally, later findings in this report show voters are supportive county government efforts to deal with drought for the long-term.

Detail: Effects of Prolonged Drought and Lack of Rain

	<i>Major Issue</i>	<i>Minor Issue</i>	<i>Not an Issue</i>	<i>Not sure</i>	<i>2002-2006 chg. in Major Issue</i>
<b>Gila county</b>	89%	5%	3%	3%	-1 pt.
<b>Southern Gila</b>	85	8	4	3	-4
<b>Northern Gila</b>	93	3	2	3	+3
<b>Democrat</b>	89	5	3	3	-1
<b>Republican</b>	88	6	3	3	-1
<b>Indep./Other</b>	92	4	3	1	+7
<b>Male</b>	91	4	3	2	+3
<b>Female</b>	87	7	2	4	-4
<b>Anglo/Caucasian</b>	91	4	3	2	+2
<b>Minority</b>	78	12	3	7	-25
<b>Under \$25K</b>	83	10	3	4	-3
<b>\$25K to \$49.9K</b>	89	3	4	4	-4
<b>\$50K and over</b>	95	3	2	0	+10
<b>Under 35 yrs. of age</b>	86	12	2	0	-2
<b>35 to 55 yrs. of age</b>	91	6	3	0	+5
<b>56 to 65 yrs. of age</b>	86	2	5	7	-9
<b>Over 65 yrs. of age</b>	90	2	3	5	+1
<b>Employed full time</b>	93	3	3	1	+8
<b>Employed part time</b>	88	12	0	0	-8
<b>Retired</b>	89	3	3	5	-2
<b>Other</b>	81	11	4	4	-8
<b>Own home</b>	90	4	2	4	N/A
<b>Rent home</b>	83	10	7	0	N/A
<b>Attended GCC</b>	86	14	0	0	-4
<b>Not attended GCC</b>	89	5	3	3	+1

Detail: The Threat of Wildfires in Your Area of the County

The table on the next page shows the detailed data on the wildfire issue. The reader should note the question was framed specifically to obtain voters' view of this issue as a local one, 'in your area of the county'.

Again we find very strong percentages of voters indicating the local threat of wildfires is a major issue for them. Again, more than two-thirds of every single voter group view the issue as a major one.

Those most likely to view it as a major issue include voters in Northern Gila, Republicans, older voters and retirees. Lower ratings, but still strong majorities, of voters in Southern Gila, Independents, minority voters, younger ones, part-time employees and those in the 'other' employment category rate this issue as a major one.

The detailed data indicate concern about the local threat of wildfires is widespread, broad and deep in Gila county. From a policy perspective, this is, obviously, another key area for policy makers to focus on given high levels of public concern about it.

Detail: The Threat of Wildfires in Your Area of the County

	<i>Major Issue</i>	<i>Minor Issue</i>	<i>Not an Issue</i>	<i>Not sure</i>	<i>2002-2006 chg. in Major Issue</i>
<b>Gila county</b>	84%	11%	5%	0%	N/A
<b>Southern Gila</b>	71	22	8	0	N/A
<b>Northern Gila</b>	95	2	2	1	N/A
<b>Democrat</b>	82	11	7	0	N/A
<b>Republican</b>	89	8	3	0	N/A
<b>Indep./Other</b>	78	19	6	0	N/A
<b>Male</b>	80	13	6	1	N/A
<b>Female</b>	87	10	3	0	N/A
<b>Anglo/Caucasian</b>	86	10	4	0	N/A
<b>Minority</b>	69	19	10	2	N/A
<b>Under \$25K</b>	80	12	8	0	N/A
<b>\$25K to \$49.9K</b>	84	12	3	1	N/A
<b>\$50K and over</b>	84	13	3	0	N/A
<b>Under 35 yrs. of age</b>	73	24	3	0	N/A
<b>35 to 55 yrs. of age</b>	80	15	5	0	N/A
<b>56 to 65 yrs. of age</b>	90	5	5	0	N/A
<b>Over 65 yrs. of age</b>	89	6	4	1	N/A
<b>Employed full time</b>	81	14	5	0	N/A
<b>Employed part time</b>	77	11	12	0	N/A
<b>Retired</b>	90	6	3	1	N/A
<b>Other</b>	75	21	4	0	N/A
<b>Own home</b>	85	10	5	0	N/A
<b>Rent home</b>	81	14	5	0	N/A
<b>Attended GCC</b>	81	14	4	1	N/A
<b>Not attended GCC</b>	85	9	5	1	N/A

### Detail: Improving Post-High School Education in Gila County

The next table shows the detailed data for the issue of improving post-high school education in Gila county. Compared to the two previous issues of water and wildfires, this one is not viewed as strongly as a major issue as those are. However, it is also clear that a majority, almost two-thirds, do, in fact, view this as a major issue, hence it is an important one for voters.

The table shows the view this is a major issue peaks among voters in Southern Gila, among minorities, middle income voters, younger ones, full-time employees, renters and those who have attended Gila Community College. Lower concern is found among Republicans, those least affluent, older voters, part-time employees and retirees.

Additionally, we find in the 2002-2006 net change column that ratings of this as a major issue have declined significantly, 10 points, since 2002. Declines in major issue ratings are most pronounced among Republicans, those most affluent, part-time employees and those in the 'other' employment category.

In sum, improving post-high school education is a major issue for well over half of voters. In no group do we find less than 50 percent rating it thusly. However, the degree to which this is considered a major issue does fluctuate significantly among voter groups and, further, such a view has declined over the recent past. Thus, from a policy perspective, we would recommend considering this issue as a major one, but of a more 'second tier' variety. In short, the drought and wildfire data clearly indicate voters consider those issues much more critical than post-high school education.

This report goes into views of Gila Community College, its effectiveness and curriculum in much more detail in a later section. We encourage policy makers and the reader to review all of the data relative to the College to get the full breadth and depth of the findings from this research.

Detail: Improving Post-High School Education in Gila County

	<i>Major Issue</i>	<i>Minor Issue</i>	<i>Not an Issue</i>	<i>Not sure</i>	<i>2002-2006 chg. in Major Issue</i>
<b>Gila county</b>	64%	22%	8%	6%	-10 pts.
<b>Southern Gila</b>	70	20	6	4	-10
<b>Northern Gila</b>	60	22	10	8	-9
<b>Democrat</b>	68	18	8	6	-8
<b>Republican</b>	59	25	8	8	-15
<b>Indep./Other</b>	65	21	8	6	0
<b>Male</b>	62	22	8	8	-6
<b>Female</b>	66	21	8	5	-13
<b>Anglo/Caucasian</b>	63	21	9	7	-11
<b>Minority</b>	72	21	3	4	-1
<b>Under \$25K</b>	58	20	12	10	-8
<b>\$25K to \$49.9K</b>	72	17	8	3	-4
<b>\$50K and over</b>	63	33	3	1	-22
<b>Under 35 yrs. of age</b>	69	30	2	0	-14
<b>35 to 55 yrs. of age</b>	66	24	7	3	-14
<b>56 to 65 yrs. of age</b>	68	15	9	8	-7
<b>Over 65 yrs. of age</b>	58	20	10	12	-8
<b>Employed full time</b>	73	23	3	1	-9
<b>Employed part time</b>	59	22	19	0	-34
<b>Retired</b>	58	19	10	13	-3
<b>Other</b>	60	28	7	4	-29
<b>Own home</b>	62	23	8	7	N/A
<b>Rent home</b>	76	19	3	2	N/A
<b>Attended GCC</b>	70	19	7	4	-9
<b>Not attended GCC</b>	60	22	9	9	-6

### Detail: The Health of Gila County's Economy

The next table shows the detailed data on the degree to which voters view the health of the county economy as a major issue. A clear majority does view it this way and another fifth view it as a minor issue.

The table shows concern over the county economy's health peaks among voters in Southern Gila, Independents, middle income voters, younger ones, full-time employees, renters and those who have attended Gila Community College. Concern is significantly less pronounced among voters in Northern Gila, older voters, part-time employees and retirees.

The 2002-2006 change column shows a major decline, 24 points, over time in ratings of this issue as a major one. Clearly, the health of the county economy is not one that is 'front and center' as it was four years ago. Further, we find even more precipitous declines in ratings among voters in Northern Gila, men, those most affluent, middle age voters and part-time employees.

As with post-high school education, this issue, while still viewed as a major one by well over half of voters, is one of the aforementioned 'second tier' variety in our view. Thus, from a policy perspective, we again reiterate that drought and wildfires are clearly ones voters see as more critical at this point in time.

Detail: The Health of Gila County's Economy

	<i>Major Issue</i>	<i>Minor Issue</i>	<i>Not an Issue</i>	<i>Not sure</i>	<i>2002-2006 chg. in Major Issue</i>
<b>Gila county</b>	61%	22%	9%	8%	-24 pts.
<b>Southern Gila</b>	69	17	7	7	-18
<b>Northern Gila</b>	54	27	10	9	-31
<b>Democrat</b>	61	21	9	9	-25
<b>Republican</b>	57	28	7	8	-25
<b>Indep./Other</b>	67	17	12	4	-24
<b>Male</b>	59	25	9	7	-29
<b>Female</b>	62	21	8	9	-21
<b>Anglo/Caucasian</b>	60	24	9	7	-25
<b>Minority</b>	65	18	4	13	-19
<b>Under \$25K</b>	58	21	10	12	-19
<b>\$25K to \$49.9K</b>	69	18	7	6	-21
<b>\$50K and over</b>	62	26	9	3	-30
<b>Under 35 yrs. of age</b>	80	12	8	0	-7
<b>35 to 55 yrs. of age</b>	63	28	6	3	-30
<b>56 to 65 yrs. of age</b>	59	17	13	11	-28
<b>Over 65 yrs. of age</b>	50	26	9	15	-27
<b>Employed full time</b>	70	22	6	2	-22
<b>Employed part time</b>	52	26	18	4	-34
<b>Retired</b>	55	24	9	12	-26
<b>Other</b>	57	19	13	11	-29
<b>Own home</b>	58	25	9	8	N/A
<b>Rent home</b>	75	14	9	3	N/A
<b>Attended GCC</b>	68	18	9	5	-19
<b>Not attended GCC</b>	55	26	9	10	-28



### Public Policy Environment Summary

In sum regarding the public policy environment in Gila county, then, we find it is unsettled to a significant degree but its foundations also appear strong. The voters are happy and they expect to remain so. They feel safe and secure but also expect to feel less so in the future. They're split on the general direction of the county but those numbers have improved significantly in the past four years. They're tuned in to key issues facing their local areas, specifically, crime, water, economy and wildfire. They, however, are less than confident in county government's ability to do what's best for voters. Yet, by margins of more than two to one, they are positive in their ratings of job performance of various county agencies, departments and the Supervisors themselves. Finally, they are clear in rating drought and wildfire at the top of their list of concerns and, further, rate issues such as post-high school education and the health of the economy as major concerns but not of prime importance.

*Thus, it is imperative for policy makers to: a) understand this environment is what they face and b) take the steps necessary, especially including consistent and clear communication with voters, to build the consensus necessary to move forward in addressing such pressing issues as noted by the voters: water, wildfire and, to a lesser degree, post-high school education and the county economy.*

### Detailed Voter Perspectives on Gila County's Economy

The next major objective of this research was to determine how voters view Gila county's economy in more detail and, further, to determine their reactions to a potential public policy initiative regarding it. Thus, the research determined voter confidence in the current structure of the economy, whether the economic structure should be broadened or not, how voters react to the idea of broadening the economy through local renewable natural resource businesses, whether the county government should play a role in this issue and whether voters support a policy proposal to broaden the economy with funding to do so from property taxes. All of these findings are discussed in the following section of the report.

#### Confidence in Gila County's Four Level Economic Foundation

In order to gain more knowledge about voter perceptions of Gila county's economy, we first described it's four key levels to voters: housing and construction, retail sales, health care and government. We then asked them if they were confident this structure will adequately serve the long-term interests of residents. The results are shown in the table on the next page.

In it we find only a fifth of voters say they are confident in this structure over the long term. A third are neutral in their rating and almost half (45%) are not confident. Thus, at the outset, we find a majority of voters less-than-confident the current structure of the county economy is sufficient.

The table also shows confidence in the existing structure peaks only among minority voters, younger ones and renters. Further, we find it is middle age voters and part-time employees who are least confident. We also note the lack of confidence in the current structure is found at 40% and higher for the vast majority of voter groups.

In short, the narrow four-level focus of the county's economy is of concern to most voters. Confidence in it never rises to even a third among any voter group. Thus it is clear that when voters begin to engage more fully on the issue of the structure of the county economy, they begin to show significant concern, as evinced in the lack of confidence indicated in the table.

Confidence in Gila County's Four Level Economic Foundation

	<i>Confident</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Not Confident</i>
<b>Gila county</b>	22%	33%	45%
<b>Southern Gila</b>	22	31	47
<b>Northern Gila</b>	22	35	43
<b>Democrat</b>	22	32	46
<b>Republican</b>	22	33	45
<b>Indep./Other</b>	21	37	42
<b>Male</b>	26	30	44
<b>Female</b>	18	36	46
<b>Anglo/Caucasian</b>	20	35	45
<b>Minority</b>	29	28	43
<b>Under \$25K</b>	24	35	41
<b>\$25K to \$49.9K</b>	24	32	44
<b>\$50K and over</b>	18	35	47
<b>Under 35 yrs. of age</b>	27	28	45
<b>35 to 55 yrs. of age</b>	16	30	54
<b>56 to 65 yrs. of age</b>	27	32	41
<b>Over 65 yrs. of age</b>	21	41	38
<b>Employed full time</b>	23	28	49
<b>Employed part time</b>	11	22	67
<b>Retired</b>	25	36	39
<b>Other</b>	13	43	44
<b>Own home</b>	20	35	45
<b>Rent home</b>	27	25	48
<b>Attended GCC</b>	20	33	47
<b>Not attended GCC</b>	22	33	45

Should Gila County's Four Level Economic Foundation be Broadened or Remain Focused

In further exploring voter perceptions of the structure of the county economy, we asked them if the existing four-level foundation should be broadened or remain focused as it is. The results are shown in the next table.

By more than three to one, voters say the county economy should be broadened rather than remain focused as it is today. Over two-thirds say it should be broadened while only a fifth say it should remain focused. Fewer than one in ten are unsure.

Importantly, we note that two-thirds or more of the vast majority of voter groups say the county economy should be broadened. Belief it should remain focused never reaches to a third of voters.

The table shows the belief the county economy should be broadened peaks among Independents, those most affluent, younger and middle age voters, both full- and part-time employees, renters and those who have attended Gila Community College.

Belief the economy should remain focused peaks among older voters, retirees and those who have not attend Gila Community College.

Clearly, then, a strong majority consensus is found on the issue of broadening the county economy. Voters appear to recognize a vibrant, changing economy more able to meet new demands and opportunities is better than a static one focused on the same areas over a long period of time.

Should Gila County's Four Level Economic Foundation be Broadened or Remain Focused

	<i>Broadened</i>	<i>Remain Focused</i>	<i>Not Sure</i>
<b>Gila county</b>	72%	21%	7%
<b>Southern Gila</b>	72	22	6
<b>Northern Gila</b>	71	21	8
<b>Democrat</b>	65	25	10
<b>Republican</b>	73	22	5
<b>Indep./Other</b>	84	12	4
<b>Male</b>	71	23	6
<b>Female</b>	72	20	8
<b>Anglo/Caucasian</b>	73	21	6
<b>Minority</b>	63	24	13
<b>Under \$25K</b>	67	21	12
<b>\$25K to \$49.9K</b>	74	23	3
<b>\$50K and over</b>	79	15	6
<b>Under 35 yrs. of age</b>	81	19	0
<b>35 to 55 yrs. of age</b>	81	13	6
<b>56 to 65 yrs. of age</b>	69	22	9
<b>Over 65 yrs. of age</b>	59	30	11
<b>Employed full time</b>	80	16	4
<b>Employed part time</b>	81	15	4
<b>Retired</b>	63	28	9
<b>Other</b>	70	17	13
<b>Own home</b>	72	21	7
<b>Rent home</b>	78	21	1
<b>Attended GCC</b>	81	15	4
<b>Not attended GCC</b>	63	27	10

### Encourage New Businesses Based on Local Renewable Natural Resources in Gila County

We next described to voters the idea of broadening the county economy by encouraging new businesses based on local renewable natural resources and asked if they believe this is a good idea or a bad idea. The results are shown in the table on the next page.

By a three to one ratio we find voters say this is a good idea rather than a bad one. Two-thirds say broadening the economy by focusing on new businesses based on local renewable natural resources is a good idea. Only a fifth disagree and only one in ten are unsure. Voters clearly endorse it.

The detailed data indicate the vast majority of voters in every single subgroup endorse this idea about broadening the local economy. In no group does the belief it's a good idea fall below 50 percent and in only one group (part-time employees) does the belief this is a bad idea exceed a quarter.

In our opinion, not only do voters say this is a good idea, *we are also seeing in these numbers the deeper voters are engaged on the issue of the economy, the more the outlines of a consensus is found.* In short, they're not confident in the existing structure, think it should be broadened, and now we find they believe a local renewable natural resource-based economy is a good idea.

Encourage New Businesses Based on Local Renewable Natural Resources in Gila County

	<i>Good Idea</i>	<i>Bad Idea</i>	<i>Not Sure</i>
<b>Gila county</b>	69%	21%	10%
<b>Southern Gila</b>	71	19	10
<b>Northern Gila</b>	67	23	10
<b>Democrat</b>	68	22	10
<b>Republican</b>	72	19	9
<b>Indep./Other</b>	63	25	12
<b>Male</b>	69	20	11
<b>Female</b>	69	21	10
<b>Anglo/Caucasian</b>	69	22	9
<b>Minority</b>	67	16	17
<b>Under \$25K</b>	69	20	11
<b>\$25K to \$49.9K</b>	67	24	9
<b>\$50K and over</b>	71	21	8
<b>Under 35 yrs. of age</b>	64	13	23
<b>35 to 55 yrs. of age</b>	72	23	5
<b>56 to 65 yrs. of age</b>	75	25	0
<b>Over 65 yrs. of age</b>	63	21	16
<b>Employed full time</b>	72	16	12
<b>Employed part time</b>	54	42	4
<b>Retired</b>	64	25	11
<b>Other</b>	81	11	8
<b>Own home</b>	69	23	8
<b>Rent home</b>	67	12	21
<b>Attended GCC</b>	75	17	8
<b>Not attended GCC</b>	63	25	12

### Gila County Government's Role in Helping Broaden the Economy

Next, we asked voters if it is an appropriate role for Gila County government to get involved and help broaden the county economy. The results are shown in the table on the next page.

Voters clearly think it is appropriate for Gila County government to be involved in this effort. By more than three to one, they agree. We find 70 percent say this is an appropriate role for county government while only a fifth say it is not appropriate. Only about one in ten are unsure.

The table shows the belief this is an appropriate role for county government is widespread and deep. Strong majorities of every voter group save one (part-time employees) agree on this issue. Further, the belief this is not an appropriate role for county government is found below a third in all voter groups, save two (part-time employees and renters). Thus it is clear there is a strong consensus among voters that it is appropriate for Gila County government to help broaden the economy, particularly in the area of local renewable natural resource businesses.



Gila County Government's Role in Helping Broaden the Economy

	<i>Appropriate</i>	<i>Not Appropriate</i>	<i>Not Sure</i>
<b>Gila county</b>	70%	21%	9%
<b>Southern Gila</b>	74	17	9
<b>Northern Gila</b>	66	25	9
<b>Democrat</b>	72	17	11
<b>Republican</b>	70	23	7
<b>Indep./Other</b>	66	29	5
<b>Male</b>	71	22	7
<b>Female</b>	69	20	11
<b>Anglo/Caucasian</b>	70	21	9
<b>Minority</b>	68	22	10
<b>Under \$25K</b>	63	25	12
<b>\$25K to \$49.9K</b>	72	21	7
<b>\$50K and over</b>	79	18	3
<b>Under 35 yrs. of age</b>	74	23	3
<b>35 to 55 yrs. of age</b>	77	18	5
<b>56 to 65 yrs. of age</b>	67	28	5
<b>Over 65 yrs. of age</b>	62	20	18
<b>Employed full time</b>	82	14	4
<b>Employed part time</b>	54	38	8
<b>Retired</b>	64	22	14
<b>Other</b>	62	30	8
<b>Own home</b>	72	19	9
<b>Rent home</b>	60	35	5
<b>Attended GCC</b>	74	19	7
<b>Not attended GCC</b>	65	24	11

### Support/Oppose Gila County Using Taxpayer Money to Help Broaden Economy

By a margin of two to one, voters in Gila county also say they support Gila County government using taxpayer monies to help broaden the county economy. The table on the next page shows the detailed data on this issue.

In it we find fully 61 percent of voters support this idea while only 30 percent oppose it. Again, few are found to be unsure.

The table also shows support peaks among those most affluent, younger voters, full-time employees and renters. Those most likely to oppose county government involvement includes Independents and part-time employees.

Clearly, then, on a conceptual level voters support county government involvement in such a strategic issue as helping broaden the economy. The next table will see how voters feel about this concept when 'the rubber meets the road' and they're responding to specific costs to them in order for county government to become involved on this issue.

Support/Oppose Gila County Using Taxpayer Money to Help Broaden Economy

	<i>Total Support</i>	<i>Total Oppose</i>	<i>Not Sure</i>
<b>Gila county</b>	61%	30%	9%
<b>Southern Gila</b>	63	27	10
<b>Northern Gila</b>	59	33	8
<b>Democrat</b>	64	23	13
<b>Republican</b>	59	34	7
<b>Indep./Other</b>	55	41	4
<b>Male</b>	59	34	7
<b>Female</b>	62	28	10
<b>Anglo/Caucasian</b>	63	31	6
<b>Minority</b>	55	25	20
<b>Under \$25K</b>	52	33	15
<b>\$25K to \$49.9K</b>	65	32	3
<b>\$50K and over</b>	73	26	1
<b>Under 35 yrs. of age</b>	69	28	3
<b>35 to 55 yrs. of age</b>	65	32	3
<b>56 to 65 yrs. of age</b>	59	27	14
<b>Over 65 yrs. of age</b>	53	32	15
<b>Employed full time</b>	69	28	3
<b>Employed part time</b>	38	58	4
<b>Retired</b>	55	31	14
<b>Other</b>	64	23	13
<b>Own home</b>	60	31	9
<b>Rent home</b>	66	29	5
<b>Attended GCC</b>	65	26	9
<b>Not attended GCC</b>	56	34	10

### Support/Oppose Gila County Using \$25/Year Property Tax Money to Help Broaden Economy

Next, we again tested support and opposition to Gila County government involvement in helping broaden the economy, but this time we ensured voters recognize the effort would affect many of their own pocketbooks. So the question specifically noted involvement would cost the owner of a \$150,000 home about \$25 a year in additional property tax. The results of this more robust question are shown in the table on the next page.

The table shows a clear majority, 55%, continue to support Gila County government involvement in helping broaden the economy. This is compared to 61 percent support without the property tax dollar figure introduced. So support did drop significantly, six points as shown in the 'Change in Support' column of the table, but it also continues to be the majority position of Gila county voters.

Additionally, we note opposition to county government involvement increased, 10 points, to 40 percent. Thus a significant increase in opposition is registered once the dollar impact on individual property owners is introduced.

The table shows majority support remains among most voter groups once the dollar impact is introduced. This includes both Southern and Northern Gila, Democrats, Republicans and Independents, men and women, Anglo and minority voters, middle income and affluent voters, younger, middle age and some older voters, full-time employees, homeowners and renters and those who have attended Gila Community College.

The change in support column shows significant declines in support, above the -6 point sample norm, are found only among the county's oldest voters and retirees (-11 points each).

Thus, the cost to taxpayers issue is found to have a moderate impact on support among the vast majority of voters in the county. It is only very pronounced among a specific slice: older voters/retirees. This is very important as it shows a substantial resilience of voter support on the issue of county government involvement in broadening the economy.

Finally, the shifting patterns of response once voters become aware of monetary impact on their property taxes is quite the norm. It almost always occurs when voters have the full story on such a pocketbook issue. So, it is not surprising to us in any way that support for county involvement would decrease and that opposition would increase. Our experience in this regard is that usually support drops precipitously among wide swaths of voters. That's not the case on this issue, thus the conclusion that voter support for county government helping broaden the economy is resilient and that it likely would solidify more as voters know more about what county government actually might do regarding this issue.

Support/Oppose Gila County Using \$25/Year Property Tax Money to Help Broaden Economy

	<i>Total Support</i>	<i>Total Oppose</i>	<i>Not Sure</i>	<i>Change in Support</i>
<b>Gila county</b>	55%	40%	5%	-6 pts.
<b>Southern Gila</b>	57	38	5	-6
<b>Northern Gila</b>	52	43	5	-7
<b>Democrat</b>	55	37	8	-9
<b>Republican</b>	51	44	5	-8
<b>Indep./Other</b>	59	41	0	+4
<b>Male</b>	51	44	5	-8
<b>Female</b>	58	37	5	-4
<b>Anglo/Caucasian</b>	56	40	4	-7
<b>Minority</b>	50	41	9	-5
<b>Under \$25K</b>	46	46	8	-6
<b>\$25K to \$49.9K</b>	63	36	1	-2
<b>\$50K and over</b>	64	35	1	-9
<b>Under 35 yrs. of age</b>	67	33	0	-2
<b>35 to 55 yrs. of age</b>	63	34	3	-2
<b>56 to 65 yrs. of age</b>	51	45	4	-8
<b>Over 65 yrs. of age</b>	42	48	10	-11
<b>Employed full time</b>	68	30	2	-1
<b>Employed part time</b>	39	58	3	-1
<b>Retired</b>	44	48	8	-11
<b>Other</b>	56	36	8	-8
<b>Own home</b>	53	42	5	-7
<b>Rent home</b>	61	39	0	-5
<b>Attended GCC</b>	62	35	3	-3
<b>Not attended GCC</b>	48	45	7	-8

### Detailed Voter Perspectives on Forest Health and Wildfire Issues

The third major objective of this research was to determine how voters view forest health and wildfire issues in great detail and, further, to determine their reactions to a potential public policy initiative regarding them. Thus, the research determined how they view the health of the forests in Gila County, who's responsible for forest health, whether improving forest health is achievable, voter perceptions of their vulnerability to wildfires, voter reactions to three remediation options, support for Gila County government taking the leading role in addressing forest health and wildfire problems, whether local initiative on such issues will spur additional funding and then support for Gila County government involvement given an average increase of \$25 per year in property taxes to pay for such efforts. All of these findings are discussed in the following section of the report.

#### The Health of the Forests in Gila County

The next major public policy issue area we researched in-depth concerns the forests in the county and the threat of wildfire. The results of this research are shown in the next 11 tables.

In beginning this line of questioning, we first wanted to determine how voters view the overall health of the forests in Gila county. Those results are shown in the table on the next page.

In it, we find only a fifth of voters rate forest health positively while half rate it negatively. A quarter rate forest health as only 'fair'. Given their concern expressed previously about wildfires, it is not surprising to find half of voters rating forest health in negative terms.

The table also shows those most likely to rate forest health in positive terms include voters in Southern Gila, minorities, those most affluent and younger voters. But even among these groups, positive ratings are found only at the 31 percent mark, at best. Clearly belief the forests are healthy is very limited in Gila county.

Underscoring this point is the fact that those most likely to rate forest health negatively include voters in Northern Gila, Republicans, some older voters, part-time employees and those in the 'other' employment category. These are large portions of major blocks of voters in the county, particularly in the north and among Republicans. We also note negative ratings on forest health are found at the 40 percent mark and above for most voter groups.

The data clearly indicate on the fundamental point of forest health that voters in Gila county are concerned. Few rate health positively and a majority rate it negatively. Further, many voters in various key voter groups are also negative on the forest health issue. Thus, there certainly appears a foundation for public policy addressing this issue is in place.

The Health of the Forests in Gila County

	<i>Excellent/ Good</i>	<i>Fair</i>	<i>Poor/ Very Poor</i>	<i>Not Sure</i>
<b>Gila county</b>	22%	24%	51%	3%
<b>Southern Gila</b>	31	26	39	4
<b>Northern Gila</b>	14	24	61	1
<b>Democrat</b>	26	24	46	4
<b>Republican</b>	15	27	57	1
<b>Indep./Other</b>	24	21	54	1
<b>Male</b>	21	26	52	1
<b>Female</b>	22	24	50	4
<b>Anglo/Caucasian</b>	20	25	52	3
<b>Minority</b>	28	22	46	3
<b>Under \$25K</b>	21	22	54	3
<b>\$25K to \$49.9K</b>	21	27	51	1
<b>\$50K and over</b>	27	27	44	2
<b>Under 35 yrs. of age</b>	30	25	45	0
<b>35 to 55 yrs. of age</b>	22	23	52	3
<b>56 to 65 yrs. of age</b>	17	24	56	3
<b>Over 65 yrs. of age</b>	21	26	50	3
<b>Employed full time</b>	24	27	47	2
<b>Employed part time</b>	12	19	69	0
<b>Retired</b>	20	28	50	2
<b>Other</b>	26	11	56	7
<b>Own home</b>	21	25	52	2
<b>Rent home</b>	24	29	43	4
<b>Attended GCC</b>	23	20	52	3
<b>Not attended GCC</b>	20	29	48	3

### Top-of-Mind Responses to Who is Responsible for Forest Health in Gila County

Shown in the table below, when asked in an open-end question, that is with no prompting, who is responsible for the health of the forests in Gila county, almost half of respondents say they believe the US Forest Service is the responsible party while a fifth also say the community/everyone in the county or ‘the government’ are responsible. Various other entities whom voters believe are responsible for forest health, all found at less than 10 percent each, are shown in the table.

Clearly voters believe the responsibility for forest health is shared among a variety of interests, with the Forest Service and ‘government’ as the most frequent response. However, it’s also important to note that, again without being prompted, a significant percentage of voters indicate local and/or personal responsibility.

*Voter acknowledgment of shared responsibility, including local responsibility, we believe, is a fundamental and crucial point for policy makers to be aware of. In our view, it underlies the motivation voters demonstrate in the results of subsequent questioning on forest and wildfire public policy issues shown in the next several pages of this report.*

	<i>Percent of Respondents</i>
• <b>US Forest Service</b>	59%
• <b>Community/everyone</b>	21
• <b>The Government (no further detail)</b>	19
• <b>Nature/God (no further detail)</b>	7
• <b>Gila County</b>	5
• <b>Property owners</b>	3
• <b>State of Arizona</b>	3
• <b>Environmentalists</b>	2
• <b>Wildlife Department, Game and Fish</b>	1
• <b>Bureau of Land Management</b>	1
• <b>County supervisors</b>	1
• <b>All other comments (&lt; 1% each)</b>	2
• <b>Don’t know</b>	4



### Is Improving the Health of the Forests in Gila County an Achievable Goal

The next aspect of the forest health and wildfire issue was to determine if voters believe that improving the health of the forests in Gila county is an achievable goal. Can it be done, in short? This is obviously a crucial aspect of public policy on forest health, as regardless of voter attitudes about the health of the forest or who's responsible, the fact is that if voters believe improving forest health is not an achievable goal, then there's not going to be much breadth and depth of support for public policy or policy makers to attempt to do anything about the problem.

The next table shows the reader that voters in Gila county do, in fact, believe improving forest health is an achievable goal. Over half say it is achievable while less than a fifth say it is not. A quarter are neutral.

The table also shows the belief improving forest health is achievable is widespread, with about half of the vast majority of voter groups indicating it is achievable. This belief peaks among voters in Northern Gila, full-time employees, those in the 'other' employment category and renters.

The belief improving forest health is not achievable is found below a fifth of every single voter group.

*These data clearly indicate a strong majority of voters in Gila county believe improving forest health can be done. This finding provides policy makers the knowledge that a foundation of voter support to address the issue of forest health exists. Then, assuming solid, reasonable and likely successful specifics of a policy are offered by policy makers, voters appear highly likely to support them.*

And that issue is what we investigate further in upcoming tables of this report.

Is Improving the Health of the Forests in Gila County an Achievable Goal

	<i>Definitely/ Probably</i>	<i>Neutral/ Not Sure</i>	<i>Definitely Not/ Probably Not</i>
<b>Gila county</b>	56%	27%	17%
<b>Southern Gila</b>	50	31	19
<b>Northern Gila</b>	60	25	15
<b>Democrat</b>	50	31	19
<b>Republican</b>	54	22	14
<b>Indep./Other</b>	53	28	19
<b>Male</b>	57	26	17
<b>Female</b>	54	29	17
<b>Anglo/Caucasian</b>	57	26	17
<b>Minority</b>	48	35	17
<b>Under \$25K</b>	58	30	12
<b>\$25K to \$49.9K</b>	59	23	18
<b>\$50K and over</b>	54	28	18
<b>Under 35 yrs. of age</b>	56	27	17
<b>35 to 55 yrs. of age</b>	57	29	14
<b>56 to 65 yrs. of age</b>	53	22	15
<b>Over 65 yrs. of age</b>	50	29	21
<b>Employed full time</b>	60	24	16
<b>Employed part time</b>	44	45	11
<b>Retired</b>	52	27	21
<b>Other</b>	61	28	11
<b>Own home</b>	54	28	18
<b>Rent home</b>	64	26	10
<b>Attended GCC</b>	54	26	20
<b>Not attended GCC</b>	57	29	14

### Vulnerability to Wildfires of Respondent's Local Area

Another key aspect of public policy on forest health and wildfires is to determine if voters feel vulnerable to wildfires in their own local area. The table on the next page shows the data on this issue among Gila county voters.

And the data are compelling. By a margin of more than seven to one, voters in Gila county rate their local area as vulnerable to wildfires rather than not vulnerable. Fully three-quarters say their area is vulnerable while only one in ten disagree and another 15 percent are neutral. There is no doubt voters in the county feel vulnerable in their own local area to wildfires.

The detailed data show strong majorities of every single voter group say they are vulnerable to wildfires. This sentiment does not drop below 60 percent in any group and rise to almost 90 percent in Northern Gila. Further, in no group does the belief they are not vulnerable to wildfires rise above 19 percent.

*Thus, the table clearly shows a strong breadth and depth among voters in Gila county on the belief their local area is vulnerable to wildfires. This provides another key piece of knowledge to policy makers, showing a strong foundation of voter support for policy addressing the forest health and wildfire issue exists.*

Vulnerability to Wildfires of Respondent's Local Area

	<i>Vulnerable/ Extremely Vulnerable</i>	<i>Neutral/ Not Sure</i>	<i>Not Vulnerable/ Not Vulnerable at all</i>
<b>Gila county</b>	75%	15%	10%
<b>Southern Gila</b>	62	20	18
<b>Northern Gila</b>	86	10	4
<b>Democrat</b>	74	13	13
<b>Republican</b>	79	14	7
<b>Indep./Other</b>	71	20	9
<b>Male</b>	74	16	10
<b>Female</b>	76	13	11
<b>Anglo/Caucasian</b>	77	14	9
<b>Minority</b>	63	18	19
<b>Under \$25K</b>	71	14	15
<b>\$25K to \$49.9K</b>	75	17	8
<b>\$50K and over</b>	78	13	9
<b>Under 35 yrs. of age</b>	67	22	11
<b>35 to 55 yrs. of age</b>	72	15	13
<b>56 to 65 yrs. of age</b>	76	16	6
<b>Over 65 yrs. of age</b>	80	10	10
<b>Employed full time</b>	64	22	11
<b>Employed part time</b>	67	18	15
<b>Retired</b>	82	9	9
<b>Other</b>	82	9	9
<b>Own home</b>	78	14	8
<b>Rent home</b>	66	17	17
<b>Attended GCC</b>	72	16	12
<b>Not attended GCC</b>	78	13	9

### Likelihood of Various Methods/Mean of Addressing Wildfire Vulnerability in Gila County

The next key issue was to determine if voters believe certain actions addressing wildfire vulnerability in Gila county are likely to occur. The table below shows the three actions tested in this research and subsequent tables will show the detailed data by voter groups on each.

Below we see voters in Gila county are skeptical that any of the actions tested in the research are actually likely to occur. This includes private property clean-up by homeowners, tree thinning and debris removal by the federal government and construction of fire breaks around local communities by the federal government

In all cases a majority of Gila county voters are skeptical each will occur and, when it comes to actions by the federal government, skepticism rises significantly.

More specifically, less than half of voters believe private property clean up by homeowners is likely and only about a third believe actions on wildfire vulnerability by the federal government are likely. In each case, about a quarter are neutral or unsure and outright skepticism rises to 40 percent on the firebreaks issue.

Thus, the table below clearly shows skepticism that actions addressing wildfire vulnerability will actually occur is the norm among voters in the county.

	<i>Likely/ Highly Likely</i>	<i>Neutral/ Not Sure</i>	<i>Not Likely/ Not at all Likely</i>
<b>Private property clean up, maintenance and establishment of a fire safety perimeter around residences conducted by individual homeowners.</b>	47%	26%	27%
<b>Tree thinning and debris removal conducted by the federal government.</b>	37	28	35
<b>Construction of fire breaks around communities conducted by the federal government.</b>	33	27	40

### Likelihood of Homeowners Cleaning up Their Property, Building Fire Safety Perimeter

While skeptical, the action on wildfire vulnerability that voters believe is more likely to occur than any federal government effort tested is that private homeowners will clean up their properties and build a fire safety perimeter around their residence. Less than a majority actually believe this will occur, but that belief is still significantly higher than federal efforts. Further, fully a quarter say it will not occur and another quarter are neutral or unsure.

The table shows belief private clean-up will occur peaks only among Republicans, women, older voters, those in the 'other' employment category and renters. This is a narrow profile, indicating high levels of belief that private clean-up will occur is not the norm among Gila county voters.

Further, skepticism of this action peaks among voters in Southern Gila, Independents, younger voters, those employed full-time and renters.

Compared to other tested actions, while voters are more likely to believe private clean-up by individual homeowners is more likely to occur, the detailed numbers indicate there is little to no consensus on it. In short, voters are indicating some strong skepticism on this issue.

Likelihood of Homeowners Cleaning up Their Property, Building Fire Safety Perimeter

	<i>Likely/ Highly Likely</i>	<i>Neutral/ Not Sure</i>	<i>Not Likely/ Not Likely at all</i>
<b>Gila county</b>	47%	26%	27%
<b>Southern Gila</b>	42	24	34
<b>Northern Gila</b>	51	28	21
<b>Democrat</b>	43	30	27
<b>Republican</b>	57	22	21
<b>Indep./Other</b>	39	25	36
<b>Male</b>	41	28	31
<b>Female</b>	53	24	23
<b>Anglo/Caucasian</b>	49	24	27
<b>Minority</b>	38	37	25
<b>Under \$25K</b>	51	24	25
<b>\$25K to \$49.9K</b>	44	25	31
<b>\$50K and over</b>	42	29	29
<b>Under 35 yrs. of age</b>	45	15	40
<b>35 to 55 yrs. of age</b>	44	25	31
<b>56 to 65 yrs. of age</b>	46	39	15
<b>Over 65 yrs. of age</b>	53	23	24
<b>Employed full time</b>	44	24	32
<b>Employed part time</b>	42	27	31
<b>Retired</b>	47	28	25
<b>Other</b>	60	23	17
<b>Own home</b>	46	28	26
<b>Rent home</b>	54	12	34
<b>Attended GCC</b>	44	30	26
<b>Not attended GCC</b>	51	22	27

### Likelihood of Federal Government Conducting Tree Thinning, Debris Removal

The next table shows detailed data on whether voters believe the federal government is likely to engage in tree-thinning and debris removal in the forests of Gila county. Only slightly more than a third believe this is likely to occur and almost two-thirds are skeptical.

The detailed data indicate skepticism is the norm among most all voter groups. Belief tree-thinning by the federal government is likely peaks at less than half (48%, among younger voters) and does not break even the 40 percent mark among most groups. Further, skepticism does break this mark among several groups: Independents, those least affluent, some older voters, part-time employees and those in the 'other' employment category.

In sum, voters in the county are simply skeptical that the federal government will thin trees and remove debris from the forests any time soon. Given their concern over wildfires, their feelings of vulnerability to them, it is clear voters in the county are not of the impression that the federal government will 'take care of' thinning and debris removal for them.



Likelihood of Federal Government Conducting Tree Thinning, Debris Removal

	<i>Likely/ Highly Likely</i>	<i>Neutral/ Not Sure</i>	<i>Not Likely/ Not Likely at all</i>
<b>Gila county</b>	37%	28%	35%
<b>Southern Gila</b>	38	28	34
<b>Northern Gila</b>	35	29	36
<b>Democrat</b>	41	28	31
<b>Republican</b>	36	27	37
<b>Indep./Other</b>	25	33	42
<b>Male</b>	39	30	31
<b>Female</b>	34	27	39
<b>Anglo/Caucasian</b>	35	30	35
<b>Minority</b>	42	23	35
<b>Under \$25K</b>	31	28	41
<b>\$25K to \$49.9K</b>	39	31	30
<b>\$50K and over</b>	40	26	34
<b>Under 35 yrs. of age</b>	48	14	38
<b>35 to 55 yrs. of age</b>	37	30	33
<b>56 to 65 yrs. of age</b>	29	30	41
<b>Over 65 yrs. of age</b>	36	32	32
<b>Employed full time</b>	40	29	31
<b>Employed part time</b>	27	27	46
<b>Retired</b>	36	31	33
<b>Other</b>	30	19	51
<b>Own home</b>	35	29	36
<b>Rent home</b>	42	19	39
<b>Attended GCC</b>	34	29	37
<b>Not attended GCC</b>	38	28	34

### Likelihood of Federal Government Constructing Fire Breaks Around Local Communities

The next table shows voters are even more skeptical that the federal government will build fire breaks around local communities. Only a third believe it is likely and fully 40 percent do not. The balance, about a quarter, are neutral or unsure.

The detailed data indicate skepticism is widespread on this issue. We find a plurality who believe the federal government is likely to build fire breaks only among three voter groups: minority voters, younger ones and renters.

Further, we find a plurality who are skeptical the federal government is likely to build fire breaks among fully *18 voter groups* in the table. Clearly, Gila county voters just don't buy into the idea the federal government will 'take care of' the fire breaks issue around local communities. They just don't believe it will actually happen any time soon.

Likelihood of Federal Government Constructing Fire Breaks Around Local Communities

	<i>Likely/ Highly Likely</i>	<i>Neutral/ Not Sure</i>	<i>Not Likely/ Not Likely at all</i>
<b>Gila county</b>	33%	27%	40%
<b>Southern Gila</b>	30	25	45
<b>Northern Gila</b>	36	28	36
<b>Democrat</b>	32	27	41
<b>Republican</b>	37	26	37
<b>Indep./Other</b>	32	28	40
<b>Male</b>	38	23	39
<b>Female</b>	30	30	40
<b>Anglo/Caucasian</b>	33	25	42
<b>Minority</b>	36	34	30
<b>Under \$25K</b>	37	22	41
<b>\$25K to \$49.9K</b>	33	25	42
<b>\$50K and over</b>	35	30	35
<b>Under 35 yrs. of age</b>	47	19	34
<b>35 to 55 yrs. of age</b>	29	34	37
<b>56 to 65 yrs. of age</b>	29	25	46
<b>Over 65 yrs. of age</b>	35	25	40
<b>Employed full time</b>	35	28	37
<b>Employed part time</b>	22	30	48
<b>Retired</b>	36	24	40
<b>Other</b>	28	30	42
<b>Own home</b>	31	26	43
<b>Rent home</b>	41	29	30
<b>Attended GCC</b>	37	21	42
<b>Not attended GCC</b>	32	30	38

### Support/Oppose Gila County Taking Leading Role on Forest Health, Wildfire Problems

Given substantial concern about forest health and wildfires and, further, skepticism that remedial actions are likely to occur in the short term, we next asked voters if they support Gila County government taking the leading role on addressing these issues. The results are shown in the table on the next page.

And they show a very large majority of voters in the county support Gila County government leading on these issues. Fully eight out of ten support this while opposition is registered substantially below the 20 percent mark. Further, less than one in ten are unsure. The data are compelling, especially given the context noted above, that voters want their county government to take the lead on forest health and wildfire problems.

The detailed data are even more compelling as we find support for county government leading on these issues does not drop below the two-thirds mark among any voter group. Additionally, support peaks among middle income voters, younger ones and those in the 'other' employment category.

Importantly, opposition peaks only at a fifth among four voter groups: voters in Southern Gila, minority voters, those most affluent and some older voters.

*In short, support for Gila County government taking the leading role on forest health and wildfire issues is broad, deep and widespread while opposition to this is quite minimal among every single voter group. This clearly indicates a very strong foundation of public support for policy makers to address forest health and wildfire issues in the county.*

Support/Oppose Gila County Taking Leading Role on Forest Health, Wildfire Problems

	<i>Total Support</i>	<i>Total Oppose</i>	<i>Not Sure</i>
<b>Gila county</b>	80%	14%	6%
<b>Southern Gila</b>	75	19	6
<b>Northern Gila</b>	84	11	5
<b>Democrat</b>	78	16	6
<b>Republican</b>	81	14	5
<b>Indep./Other</b>	83	12	5
<b>Male</b>	80	16	4
<b>Female</b>	80	13	7
<b>Anglo/Caucasian</b>	82	13	5
<b>Minority</b>	69	21	10
<b>Under \$25K</b>	82	12	6
<b>\$25K to \$49.9K</b>	88	9	3
<b>\$50K and over</b>	76	20	4
<b>Under 35 yrs. of age</b>	88	11	1
<b>35 to 55 yrs. of age</b>	83	13	4
<b>56 to 65 yrs. of age</b>	72	21	7
<b>Over 65 yrs. of age</b>	79	12	9
<b>Employed full time</b>	83	14	3
<b>Employed part time</b>	81	11	8
<b>Retired</b>	76	15	9
<b>Other</b>	85	11	4
<b>Own home</b>	80	14	6
<b>Rent home</b>	83	14	3
<b>Attended GCC</b>	79	15	6
<b>Not attended GCC</b>	81	14	5

### Likelihood of Federal, State Governments Providing Money Given Local Commitment

A key issue is whether *demonstrated* local support might ‘break the logjam’ among federal and state agencies thereby making them more likely to help fund forest health and wildfire remediation efforts in Gila county. The next table addresses that issue from the voters’ perspective.

And we find in the table a clear majority believe that demonstrated local support is likely to spur additional funding addressing forest health and wildfire problems while slightly more than a third are more skeptical. In short, the majority of voters believe that local initiative is likely to pay off in the form of additional support from higher level governments.

The table also shows this belief is the majority one in almost every single voter group (save two: older voters and part-time employees). Further, skepticism rises significantly among the very same two groups, in addition to retirees.

*It is clear, then, that voters are seeing the ‘big picture’ when it comes to forest health and wildfire problems. They recognize the existing problems, the low likelihood of others ‘taking care of’ these problems, the need for county government to lead on them and the potential positive impact such local initiative can have regarding additional funding.*

Likelihood of Federal, State Governments Providing Money Given Local Commitment

	<i>Definitely/ Probably</i>	<i>Definitely Not/ Probably Not</i>	<i>Not Sure</i>
<b>Gila county</b>	58%	37%	5%
<b>Southern Gila</b>	54	41	5
<b>Northern Gila</b>	62	34	4
<b>Democrat</b>	52	41	7
<b>Republican</b>	61	37	3
<b>Indep./Other</b>	66	30	4
<b>Male</b>	59	37	4
<b>Female</b>	58	37	5
<b>Anglo/Caucasian</b>	60	37	3
<b>Minority</b>	51	39	10
<b>Under \$25K</b>	56	40	4
<b>\$25K to \$49.9K</b>	61	36	3
<b>\$50K and over</b>	64	33	3
<b>Under 35 yrs. of age</b>	63	37	0
<b>35 to 55 yrs. of age</b>	66	32	2
<b>56 to 65 yrs. of age</b>	58	36	6
<b>Over 65 yrs. of age</b>	48	44	8
<b>Employed full time</b>	67	30	3
<b>Employed part time</b>	42	54	6
<b>Retired</b>	52	42	6
<b>Other</b>	63	31	6
<b>Own home</b>	56	39	5
<b>Rent home</b>	69	31	0
<b>Attended GCC</b>	58	38	4
<b>Not attended GCC</b>	58	37	5

### Support/Oppose Gila County Using \$25/Year Property Tax Money to Address Forest, Wildfire

As with the issue of county government involvement in broadening the local economy reported earlier, the crucial issue of voter willingness to actually pay for forest health and wildfire remediation efforts is the point where it's 'fish or cut bait' time. Thus, we tested support for county government taking the leading role on these issues, indicating such efforts would cost homeowners an additional \$25 per year in property taxes. The results are shown in the next table.

In it, we find support for county government taking this role, even and especially given the 'hit' on the homeowner pocketbook, remains high and strong. Two-thirds of voters say they support this, with the tax increase included, while opposition is less than a third. This is more than a two to one ratio of support versus opposition. Additionally, the drop in support of 15 points from the earlier test, as we indicated previously, is not surprising at all as support always drops for initiatives when the actual cost is factored in to voter decision-making. *Thus, the key point is that, given the cost, support remains at very high levels on this issue and, therefore, is extremely resilient.*

The table shows resiliency on this issue virtually across-the-board. Support peaks among Independents, middle income voters, younger and middle age voters, full- and part-time employees and renters. The change in support column of the table shows drops of support higher than the sample norm only among minority and less affluent voters, older ones and retirees. And even among most of these groups, support remains the majority position.

*Finally, there's no doubt in our minds voters want Gila County government to take the lead on forest health and wildfire issues, even given the increase in property taxes necessary to pay for those efforts.*



Support/Oppose Gila County Using \$25/Year Property Tax Money to Address Forest, Wildfire

	<i>Total Support</i>	<i>Total Oppose</i>	<i>Not Sure</i>	<i>Change in Support</i>
<b>Gila county</b>	65%	29%	6%	-15 pts.
<b>Southern Gila</b>	60	31	9	-15
<b>Northern Gila</b>	69	27	4	-15
<b>Democrat</b>	62	29	9	-16
<b>Republican</b>	63	33	4	-18
<b>Indep./Other</b>	73	22	5	-10
<b>Male</b>	63	31	6	-17
<b>Female</b>	66	27	7	-14
<b>Anglo/Caucasian</b>	68	27	5	-14
<b>Minority</b>	46	42	12	-23
<b>Under \$25K</b>	56	39	5	-26
<b>\$25K to \$49.9K</b>	74	20	6	-14
<b>\$50K and over</b>	67	27	6	-9
<b>Under 35 yrs. of age</b>	78	14	8	-10
<b>35 to 55 yrs. of age</b>	73	23	4	-10
<b>56 to 65 yrs. of age</b>	54	36	10	-18
<b>Over 65 yrs. of age</b>	55	39	6	-24
<b>Employed full time</b>	73	22	5	-10
<b>Employed part time</b>	77	23	0	-4
<b>Retired</b>	55	38	7	-21
<b>Other</b>	67	24	9	-18
<b>Own home</b>	63	30	7	-17
<b>Rent home</b>	75	23	2	-8
<b>Attended GCC</b>	65	27	8	-14
<b>Not attended GCC</b>	64	31	5	-17

### Detailed Voter Perspectives on Water Supply and Delivery Issues

The fourth major objective of this research was to determine how voters view water supply and delivery issues in detail and, further, to determine their reactions to a potential public policy initiative regarding them. Thus, the research determined if voters are concerned about water supply and delivery issues, who's responsible for these issues, how supply and delivery issues are best handled, whether they support or oppose Gila County taking the leading role on such issues, whether they support or oppose creating of regional water authorities to handle water supply and delivery and then whether they support or oppose paying an additional \$25 in property taxes per year to pay for those efforts. All of these findings are discussed in the following section of the report.

#### Concern about Long-Term Locally Available of Adequate Drinking Water

The first issue we tested in this section of the research was whether voters are concerned about water supply and delivery issues over the long-term (next five years). These data are shown in the table on the next page.

In it we find about half of voters do express concern about water supply and delivery while less than a third do not and about a fifth are unsure. Compared to forest health and wildfire issues, water supply and delivery issues, at first, appear to be less of a concern.

However, the table shows concern at the 50 percent and above mark among the vast majority of voter groups. Concern is particularly acute in Northern Gila, among those most affluent and part-time employees. Concern is lowest only among men and younger voters. *Thus, while the overall numbers are not extremely high, it is very important to note concern among the majority of most voter groups is the norm. This finding certainly reinforces the view that concern is widespread among voters in Gila county.*

Concern about Long-Term Locally Available of Adequate Drinking Water

	<i>Extremely Concerned/Concerned</i>	<i>Neutral/ Not Sure</i>	<i>Not Concerned/ Not at all Concerned</i>
<b>Gila county</b>	53%	18%	29%
<b>Southern Gila</b>	48	19	33
<b>Northern Gila</b>	58	17	25
<b>Democrat</b>	53	19	28
<b>Republican</b>	56	27	17
<b>Indep./Other</b>	50	24	26
<b>Male</b>	53	13	34
<b>Female</b>	54	22	24
<b>Anglo/Caucasian</b>	52	17	31
<b>Minority</b>	57	24	19
<b>Under \$25K</b>	54	14	32
<b>\$25K to \$49.9K</b>	53	22	25
<b>\$50K and over</b>	59	10	31
<b>Under 35 yrs. of age</b>	45	19	36
<b>35 to 55 yrs. of age</b>	56	16	28
<b>56 to 65 yrs. of age</b>	49	21	30
<b>Over 65 yrs. of age</b>	57	18	25
<b>Employed full time</b>	48	18	34
<b>Employed part time</b>	62	11	27
<b>Retired</b>	57	17	26
<b>Other</b>	51	24	25
<b>Own home</b>	53	18	29
<b>Rent home</b>	57	12	31
<b>Attended GCC</b>	53	20	27
<b>Not attended GCC</b>	54	16	30

### Top-of-Mind Responses to Who is Best Suited to Address Long-Term Local Water Needs

The table below shows who voters believe is best-suited to address long-term water supply and delivery issues in Gila county. In it, we find voters are split, there is no consensus, in short.

More specifically, a quarter say individual cities/city governments are best suited and another one in six say local water departments or companies are best suited. About a fifth say Gila County government is positioned to handle these issues while one in ten says it is Arizona state government who is. And then about one in ten say it is individuals who are best suited to handle water supply and delivery over the long-term. Importantly, we also note fully 15 percent say outright they are unsure on this issue.

Thus, the table shows no consensus on who is best-suited to address long-term water supply issues in the county. This leaves a vacuum for policy makers to deal with. *In short, a consensus on who is best-suited will go a long way in solidifying public support for policy initiatives.* The rest of this section shows how voters respond to key issues in forming a consensus and then how they react to a proposed policy initiative. *In the end, the data indicate communication with the public on water issues goes a long way in building the necessary consensus.*

	<i>Percent of Respondents</i>
• Local governments, entities (cumulative %)	(38%)
• Individual cities, city governments	23%
• Local water department, company	15
• Larger Governments (cumulative %)	(35%)
• Gila County Government	18
• State government	10
• County supervisors	2
• Federal government	4
• Chuck Herron	1
• Individual responsibility (cumulative %)	(14%)
• Community, people living there	11
• Homeowners, property owners	1
• Developers of each area	1
• Native tribes	1
• God	1
• All other responses (< 1% each)	4
• Don't know	15

### Best Approach to Addressing Long-term Water Issues

The next table shows how voters respond to the ‘big picture’ question of what approach is best to address long-term water issues: individual communities in their own ways or multiple communities acting with an integrated approach.

The table shows, by a margin of more than two to one, voters clearly think multiple communities working together, rather than individual communities alone, is the best approach to long-term water supply and delivery issues. *In short, these data clearly show voters say the foundation of a consensus on dealing with water issues in Gila county is based on multiple communities working together. This is crucial for policy makers to understand.*

The table also shows the integrated approach is one supported by majorities of almost every single voter group. It is more likely to be the position of Independents, middle income voters, younger ones, full-time employees and renters. The individual communities approach is more likely to be the position of those least affluent, older and part-time employees.

*Importantly, then, the table shows not only that multiple communities working together is the basis of a consensus on the best approach to water issues but also that a majority in almost all voter groups agree on this. Thus, the potential consensus on this issue is both broad and deep.*

Best Approach to Addressing Long-term Water Issues

	<i>Individual communities in their own ways</i>	<i>Multiple communities with integrated approach</i>	<i>Both/Neither/ Not Sure</i>
<b>Gila county</b>	26%	62%	12%
<b>Southern Gila</b>	25	61	14
<b>Northern Gila</b>	27	64	9
<b>Democrat</b>	26	59	15
<b>Republican</b>	29	63	8
<b>Indep./Other</b>	21	70	9
<b>Male</b>	27	65	8
<b>Female</b>	25	61	14
<b>Anglo/Caucasian</b>	26	63	11
<b>Minority</b>	27	58	15
<b>Under \$25K</b>	32	54	14
<b>\$25K to \$49.9K</b>	25	67	8
<b>\$50K and over</b>	17	74	9
<b>Under 35 yrs. of age</b>	22	73	5
<b>35 to 55 yrs. of age</b>	23	66	11
<b>56 to 65 yrs. of age</b>	32	56	12
<b>Over 65 yrs. of age</b>	27	57	16
<b>Employed full time</b>	21	73	6
<b>Employed part time</b>	33	48	19
<b>Retired</b>	27	58	15
<b>Other</b>	30	53	17
<b>Own home</b>	27	61	12
<b>Rent home</b>	25	70	5
<b>Attended GCC</b>	25	64	11
<b>Not attended GCC</b>	27	61	12

Support/Oppose Gila County Taking Leading Role on Long-Term Water Needs of County

The next table takes the water issue a step further for policy makers, showing voter support and opposition to Gila County government taking the leading role addressing long-term water needs of the county.

By a margin of three to one, voters support Gila County government taking a leading role on long-term water needs. Over two-thirds support it and only a quarter are in opposition.

Further, the table shows support is widespread, with strong majorities of *every single voter group* voicing support. It peaks among Independents, middle income voters, younger and middle age voters, full-time employees and renters.

We also note opposition is very low among most voter groups and barely approaches a third in only a few: Republicans, some older voters and part-time employees.

In short, these data clearly indicate voters are supportive of a leading role of Gila County government on long-term water issues. The next table takes the issue one step further, exploring how voters respond to a general public policy proposal addressing long-term water issues.

Support/Oppose Gila County Taking Leading Role on Long-Term Water Needs of County

	<i>Total Support</i>	<i>Total Oppose</i>	<i>Not Sure</i>
<b>Gila county</b>	70%	23%	7%
<b>Southern Gila</b>	70	21	9
<b>Northern Gila</b>	70	24	6
<b>Democrat</b>	68	24	8
<b>Republican</b>	64	30	6
<b>Indep./Other</b>	85	10	5
<b>Male</b>	71	23	6
<b>Female</b>	78	24	8
<b>Anglo/Caucasian</b>	72	23	5
<b>Minority</b>	60	22	18
<b>Under \$25K</b>	66	28	6
<b>\$25K to \$49.9K</b>	78	17	5
<b>\$50K and over</b>	73	19	8
<b>Under 35 yrs. of age</b>	81	16	3
<b>35 to 55 yrs. of age</b>	74	19	7
<b>56 to 65 yrs. of age</b>	61	31	8
<b>Over 65 yrs. of age</b>	67	25	8
<b>Employed full time</b>	75	18	7
<b>Employed part time</b>	64	32	4
<b>Retired</b>	67	26	7
<b>Other</b>	66	23	11
<b>Own home</b>	68	25	7
<b>Rent home</b>	81	17	2
<b>Attended GCC</b>	72	20	8
<b>Not attended GCC</b>	69	26	5



Support/Oppose Creating Regional Water Authorities to Develop and Deliver Water Locally

The research described a public policy proposal to voters regarding long-term water issues and gathered information on how they respond to it. The proposal is to create regional water authorities in the county, like in the southern and northern parts of the county, to focus entirely on long-term water supply and delivery issues within each area. The authorities would be responsible for developing supply sources and delivery systems to local communities and residents. The table on the next page shows how voters in the county respond to such a proposal.

In it we find overwhelming support for this proposal. Almost three-fourths of voters support it while less than a fifth oppose. Only 10 percent are unsure. Clearly, this concept of regional water authorities has great potential among voters.

The table also shows support for this proposal is widespread and deep. It never drops below 61 percent in any voter group and support peaks among Independents, younger voters and renters.

Further, we note opposition rises to a quarter among only among three groups: Republicans, some older voters and part-time employees.

In sum, water issues, as we saw early in this report, are of such importance to voters that they clearly and unambiguously are supportive of this potential public policy proposal that addresses long-term supply and delivery issues. The next table will show whether they are willing to pay additional property taxes to support the proposal.

Support/Oppose Creating Regional Water Authorities to Develop and Deliver Water Locally

	<i>Total Support</i>	<i>Total Oppose</i>	<i>Not Sure</i>
<b>Gila county</b>	73%	17%	10%
<b>Southern Gila</b>	73	16	11
<b>Northern Gila</b>	73	19	8
<b>Democrat</b>	75	14	11
<b>Republican</b>	66	25	9
<b>Indep./Other</b>	79	13	8
<b>Male</b>	71	19	10
<b>Female</b>	74	17	9
<b>Anglo/Caucasian</b>	73	18	9
<b>Minority</b>	72	15	13
<b>Under \$25K</b>	70	22	8
<b>\$25K to \$49.9K</b>	77	15	8
<b>\$50K and over</b>	77	12	11
<b>Under 35 yrs. of age</b>	85	15	0
<b>35 to 55 yrs. of age</b>	75	17	8
<b>56 to 65 yrs. of age</b>	61	24	15
<b>Over 65 yrs. of age</b>	72	16	12
<b>Employed full time</b>	76	17	7
<b>Employed part time</b>	69	27	4
<b>Retired</b>	72	16	12
<b>Other</b>	67	22	11
<b>Own home</b>	72	17	11
<b>Rent home</b>	78	22	0
<b>Attended GCC</b>	72	18	10
<b>Not attended GCC</b>	74	18	8

### Support/Oppose Regional Water Authorities Using \$25/Year Property Tax to Ensure Water

The final question in the series of questions on water issues in this research was whether voters are willing to pay an additional \$25 per year in property taxes to pay for regional water authorities in the county to address long-term supply and delivery issues. The table on the next page shows their responses to that question.

In it, we find almost six of ten voters support regional water authorities even when the cost issue is clearly spelled out for them. Support falls to about 50 percent only among older voters. Opposition to the proposal is found at a third of voters and does not rise to half among any voter group. Less than 10 percent are unsure.

Support, given the cost issue, peaks among Independents, those most affluent, younger voters, full-time employees and renters. Opposition peaks among Republicans, those least affluent, older voters and retirees.

The table also compares support, given the cost issue, to support before the cost issue was introduced. In that column, we find support dropped 14 points, given cost to the voters' pocketbook. We also see that support dropped more than the sample norm older voters, retirees and minorities.

As we've said before, and seen regarding other issues in this research, such a drop in support for policy proposals is the norm once the cost issue is introduced to voters. The key finding, in our opinion, is that support remained well above the 50 percent mark overall and among all voter groups save one: some older voters. In short, this proposal is supported by a strong majority of voters even when the cost issue is taken into account by them. Thus, it shows real promise as a public policy proposal as voters get to know more of the specifics and actions it involves.

*In sum, voters in Gila county are concerned about long-term water supply and delivery issues, they believe an integrated approach involving multiple communities is best, they support Gila County government taking a leading role on water, they support the idea of regional water authorities to deal with local water supply and delivery and they even support the idea once the cost to them is made apparent. Thus, it is clear from these data that a public policy proposal such as the one discussed here is likely to find strong support among voters, particularly, as we said above, when voters are made aware of more of the specifics and actions involved.*

Support/Oppose Regional Water Authorities Using \$25/Year Property Tax to Ensure Water

	<i>Total Support</i>	<i>Total Oppose</i>	<i>Not Sure</i>	<i>Change in Support</i>
<b>Gila county</b>	59%	33%	8%	-14 pts.
<b>Southern Gila</b>	62	30	8	-11
<b>Northern Gila</b>	56	37	7	-17
<b>Democrat</b>	61	29	10	-14
<b>Republican</b>	51	43	6	-15
<b>Indep./Other</b>	66	28	6	-13
<b>Male</b>	57	37	6	-14
<b>Female</b>	60	31	9	-14
<b>Anglo/Caucasian</b>	60	33	7	-13
<b>Minority</b>	53	35	12	-19
<b>Under \$25K</b>	54	39	7	-16
<b>\$25K to \$49.9K</b>	62	30	8	-15
<b>\$50K and over</b>	69	25	6	-8
<b>Under 35 yrs. of age</b>	86	14	0	+1
<b>35 to 55 yrs. of age</b>	60	33	7	-15
<b>56 to 65 yrs. of age</b>	48	41	11	-13
<b>Over 65 yrs. of age</b>	51	38	11	-21
<b>Employed full time</b>	66	28	6	-10
<b>Employed part time</b>	55	41	4	-14
<b>Retired</b>	52	38	10	-20
<b>Other</b>	62	31	7	-5
<b>Own home</b>	55	36	9	-17
<b>Rent home</b>	78	22	0	0
<b>Attended GCC</b>	59	35	6	-13
<b>Not attended GCC</b>	58	32	10	-16

### Detailed Voter Perspectives on Post-High School Education Issues

The fifth major objective of this research was to determine how voters view post-high school education in detail. Thus, the research determined how voters view the quality of public school and post-high school education in the county, whether they support various types of classroom instruction delivered by Gila Community College, how they view the academic emphasis of the college and whether a specific issue (free classes for older residents) is problematic or not. All of these findings are discussed in the following section of the report.

#### Quality of the Public School Education Gila County Students Receive

The first table in this series is shown on the next page. In it, we determine how voters view the quality of public school education in the county and compare today's numbers with those from 2002.

The table shows four of ten voters give the public schools positive marks in the quality of education Gila county students receive. A quarter rate quality as 'fair' and only a fifth are negative in their ratings. We do note a significant number, 15 percent, are unsure how to rate this issue.

We find in the table that positive ratings are most pronounced among Republicans, those most affluent and older voters while negative ratings are more pronounced among those least affluent, younger voters, part-time employees, those in the 'other' employment category and renters. 'Fair' ratings peak among voters in Southern Gila, Democrats and Independents, middle income voters, middle age voters and full-time employees.

*Thus, the table clearly shows there is no strong consensus, either positive or negative, among voters in Gila county on the quality of public school education students here receive.*

We do note a key issue from the table, however: *positive ratings have climbed significantly since 2002.* The table shows positive ratings are up a statistically significant five points since then. Further, we find the gain in positives peaks among Republicans, those most affluent, younger and middle age voters. *Thus, over time, it is clear voters in Gila county do see improvement in the quality of public school education.* The trend on this issue is clearly a good one.

Quality of the Public School Education Gila County Students Receive

	<i>Excellent/ Good</i>	<i>Fair</i>	<i>Poor/ Very Poor</i>	<i>Not Sure</i>	<i>2002-2006 Chg. in Excel./Good</i>
<b>Gila county</b>	40%	26%	19%	15%	+5 pts.
<b>Southern Gila</b>	35	32	23	10	+3
<b>Northern Gila</b>	44	22	15	19	+7
<b>Democrat</b>	38	31	17	14	+3
<b>Republican</b>	48	18	19	15	+14
<b>Indep./Other</b>	29	31	23	17	-14
<b>Male</b>	42	27	16	15	+3
<b>Female</b>	38	26	21	15	+6
<b>Anglo/Caucasian</b>	39	27	18	15	+4
<b>Minority</b>	43	23	22	12	+7
<b>Under \$25K</b>	39	23	24	14	-4
<b>\$25K to \$49.9K</b>	37	31	15	18	+3
<b>\$50K and over</b>	46	25	22	7	+11
<b>Under 35 yrs. of age</b>	27	28	42	3	+11
<b>35 to 55 yrs. of age</b>	39	32	23	6	+10
<b>56 to 65 yrs. of age</b>	41	23	14	22	-5
<b>Over 65 yrs. of age</b>	46	22	6	26	+8
<b>Employed full time</b>	37	35	23	5	+8
<b>Employed part time</b>	26	22	37	15	-24
<b>Retired</b>	44	22	8	26	+7
<b>Other</b>	40	19	35	6	+8
<b>Own home</b>	41	26	16	17	N/A
<b>Rent home</b>	33	26	36	5	N/A
<b>Attended GCC</b>	38	28	23	11	+3
<b>Not attended GCC</b>	42	24	16	18	+7

### Quality of the Education Gila Community College Students Receive

The next key issue in this series was to determine how voters view the quality of education Gila Community College (GCC) students receive. The table on the next page shows those data and also the comparable data from 2002.

In the table, we find almost four of ten voters rate the quality of education GCC students receive in positive terms while few are negative and a fifth rate quality as 'fair'.

Importantly, almost a third of voters are unsure how to rate the quality of education GCC students receive. *From that datum alone, it appears GCC has real issues of communication with voters in the county.*

The table shows those most likely to give GCC positive ratings on education quality include voters in Southern Gila, women, those in the 'other' employment category and renters. Those most likely to give negative ratings include younger and middle age voters, full-time employees, those in the 'other' employment category, renters and those who have attended GCC. Those most likely to give GCC the non-committal 'fair' rating include Independents, middle income voters, younger and middle age voters, full-time employees and renters.

Following from above, we note those most likely to be unsure how to rate GCC on education quality include voters in Northern Gila, older voters, part-time employees and retirees and those who have not attended GCC.

Importantly, the 2002-2006 change column shows a decline of eight points in this quality measure over the past four years. Such a decline is statistically significant, indicating clearly that fewer voters are likely to give GCC positive ratings now than in the past. The table shows declines even more pronounced among men, middle income voters, some older voters and part-time employees. Thus, not only do we find a decline in positives, but we also find them spiking among several voter groups in the county.

*In short, this measure of education quality delivered by GCC records generally positive findings but some key caveats are also evident. All point to a weakness among voters regarding perceptions of education quality delivered by GCC. This may be because of a lack of or weakness in communications with the public, or because of other reasons, or some combination. Regardless, these numbers for GCC education quality would seem to merit further discussion among policy makers in the county.*

Quality of the Community College Education Gila County Students Receive

	<i>Excellent/ Good</i>	<i>Fair</i>	<i>Poor/ Very Poor</i>	<i>Not Sure</i>	<i>2002-2006 Chg. in Excel./Good</i>
<b>Gila county</b>	38%	22%	9%	31%	-8 pts.
<b>Southern Gila</b>	43	26	7	24	-5
<b>Northern Gila</b>	35	18	11	36	-9
<b>Democrat</b>	40	20	9	31	-8
<b>Republican</b>	39	20	8	33	-6
<b>Indep./Other</b>	33	31	9	27	-7
<b>Male</b>	33	26	9	32	-14
<b>Female</b>	43	18	9	30	-1
<b>Anglo/Caucasian</b>	38	21	9	32	-8
<b>Minority</b>	39	26	9	26	-9
<b>Under \$25K</b>	41	18	10	31	-8
<b>\$25K to \$49.9K</b>	33	29	6	32	-13
<b>\$50K and over</b>	42	19	13	26	0
<b>Under 35 yrs. of age</b>	38	34	16	12	-4
<b>35 to 55 yrs. of age</b>	40	27	12	21	-2
<b>56 to 65 yrs. of age</b>	33	19	8	40	-16
<b>Over 65 yrs. of age</b>	42	12	3	43	-4
<b>Employed full time</b>	41	29	13	18	-7
<b>Employed part time</b>	34	22	4	41	-23
<b>Retired</b>	35	16	5	44	-9
<b>Other</b>	45	21	15	19	+3
<b>Own home</b>	38	20	8	34	N/A
<b>Rent home</b>	44	32	12	12	N/A
<b>Attended GCC</b>	40	26	14	20	-8
<b>Not attended GCC</b>	36	19	5	40	-7



### Gila Community College Job Performance Serving the Needs of County Residents

The next issue in this section of the research was to determine GCC job performance in a more general sense: serving the needs of Gila county residents. This more general measure, as opposed to educational quality previously discussed, provides a context as to voters' overall view of the college. Further, we also asked this exact same question early in the interview, in the job performance section where GCC was included with other departments and agencies of the county, in order to get a 'dual' measure on this issue. Thus, two separate questions measuring the same issue give us a stronger sense of reliability of the data.

The table on the next page shows the results. In it we find about four of ten voters give GCC a positive job performance rating on serving the needs of Gila county residents while less than a quarter rate them as 'fair' and slightly more than one in ten rate them negatively. About a fifth are unsure how to rate GCC on this issue.

We first note the data from the initial measure taken early in this survey are virtually identical to this one, taken much later in the interview. Comparing the two, we find the difference between them on each dimension of measurement within the margin of error of the research ( $\pm 5.0$  points). Thus, it is clear this measure is a reliable gauge of GCC job performance in serving the needs of Gila county residents.

The detailed data indicate positive ratings are most pronounced among voters in Southern Gila, women, minority voters, those in the 'other' employment category and renters. 'Fair' ratings peak among Republicans, younger voters, part-time employees, and renters. Negative ratings peak among voters in Northern Gila. Those unsure how to rate GCC on this issue are more likely to be older voters, retirees and those who have not attended GCC.

Thus, the general job performance measure for GCC shows that positives outpace negatives by a margin of more than three to one. This is a strong foundation for public assessment.

However, we also note less than half of voters give GCC a positive rating. Given the profile and importance of GCC in the county, this is an indicator there is room for improvement in the eyes of voters on basic GCC job performance. Further, fully a fifth are unable to rate them at all, which plays back to the communications issue noted in the pages previously. Additionally, we also note the job performance data among voters in Northern Gila are substantially less positive than Southern Gila, indicating potential disaffection with the college, for whatever reason, may exist in the north compared to the south.

*Overall, these and the previous data indicate GCC is generally viewed positively, and we emphasize that fact. But they also show that improvement in how voters view the college should be a key concern. Generally speaking, there is room for improvement. Further, that almost half of voters give GCC a 'fair' rating or are unsure about how to rate them is another indicator that GCC communications with the public, particularly in building their image, is of concern. Finally, the numbers in the north of the county versus those in the south are particularly noteworthy because they are so different from each other. This is another indicator that communications with the public is a concern with GCC.*

Gila Community College Job Performance Serving the Needs of County Residents

	<i>Excellent/ Good</i>	<i>Fair</i>	<i>Poor/ Very Poor</i>	<i>Not Sure</i>
<b>Gila county</b>	41%	24%	13%	22%
<b>Initial measure</b>	42	20	17	21
<b>Southern Gila</b>	50	24	6	20
<b>Northern Gila</b>	33	24	18	25
<b>Democrat</b>	45	21	11	23
<b>Republican</b>	38	29	13	20
<b>Indep./Other</b>	38	22	17	23
<b>Male</b>	37	28	12	23
<b>Female</b>	46	20	13	21
<b>Anglo/Caucasian</b>	38	25	14	23
<b>Minority</b>	58	18	6	18
<b>Under \$25K</b>	43	22	11	24
<b>\$25K to \$49.9K</b>	39	28	11	22
<b>\$50K and over</b>	45	23	16	16
<b>Under 35 yrs. of age</b>	44	31	14	11
<b>35 to 55 yrs. of age</b>	40	26	17	17
<b>56 to 65 yrs. of age</b>	41	23	14	22
<b>Over 65 yrs. of age</b>	39	20	8	33
<b>Employed full time</b>	42	28	15	15
<b>Employed part time</b>	35	35	15	15
<b>Retired</b>	38	20	9	33
<b>Other</b>	51	21	17	11
<b>Own home</b>	39	23	13	25
<b>Rent home</b>	48	29	14	9
<b>Attended GCC</b>	44	26	17	13
<b>Not attended GCC</b>	37	23	9	31

Support/Oppose Gila Community College Offering Various Classes and Services to Students

The next major issue to test regarding GCC was to determine how voters view general areas of the college's curriculum. The table on the next page shows the results of this line of questioning.

In it we find voters are strongly supportive of most aspects of GCC curriculum tested in this study. Over nine of every ten voters support GCC offering advanced technology training, providing young students the skills and training to get local jobs, preparing them to work in specialized trades and preparing them to further their education at four-year institutions. Almost nine of ten support retraining workers in declining industries to get jobs in new industries.

More than two-thirds support offering free classes with no tuition to older residents of the county. And almost six of ten support teaching recreational and leisure subjects at the college.

All in all, the table shows a strong consensus on the curriculum voters support for the college. Voters support the curriculum, in short. This, we believe, is a key foundation, or starting point, for the college to engage in more extensive public discussion.

Support/Oppose Gila Community College Offering Various Classes and Services to Students

	<i>Total Support</i>	<i>Total Oppose</i>	<i>Not Sure</i>
<b>Providing advanced technology training, like computers, Internet business and computer networking, for example.</b>	94%	2%	4%
<b>Providing young students the skills and training they need to successfully find jobs in Gila County.</b>	92	4	4
<b>Preparing students to students to work in specialized trades, like carpentry, automotive and electrical, for example.</b>	92	4	4
<b>Preparing students to further their education and successfully complete degree programs at a 4 year university.</b>	91	4	5
<b>Retraining workers in declining industries, like mining and logging, for work in new jobs and industries.</b>	87	8	5
<b>Offering free classes with no tuition to any county resident age 55 or older.</b>	71	22	7
<b>Teaching recreational and leisure subjects, like pottery making, yoga, weaving and aerobics, for example.</b>	59	34	7

(Detailed crosstabulations for each question by demographics are available in Volume 2, Crosstabulations.)

### General Focus of Gila Community College Services: More on Academics or Occupational

A general issue relative to the college tested in this research is the emphasis it should place on student academic instruction and preparation for four-year university versus other types of education. We tested two scenarios in this regard: a) academics versus occupational/technical instruction, such as working in specialized trades, and b) academics versus recreational and leisure instruction. The first of these, academics versus occupation/technical instruction is shown in the table on the next page.

In it we find a plurality of voters say GCC should focus its services more on occupational/technical training when compared *directly* to academics. However, we also see in the table that fully a third say GCC should focus on *both* areas of instruction. Few say it should focus on neither or are unsure.

The detailed data indicate the preference for academic instruction peaks among younger voters, renters and those who have attended GCC. The preference for occupational/technical instruction peaks among Republicans, Independents, those least affluent and those who have not attended GCC. Those most likely to emphasize both areas of instruction include Democrats and some older voters.

In sum, the data indicate voters lean slightly toward an occupational/technical training emphasis but over half also expect academic instruction to be a major component of the college, either alone or in combination with occupational classes. Thus, it appears the consensus among voters on this issue involves strong components of each key area represented in the GCC curriculum.

General Focus of Gila Community College Services: More on Academics or Occupational

	<i>Academics</i>	<i>Occupational Training</i>	<i>Both</i>	<i>Neither/ Not Sure</i>
<b>Gila county</b>	22%	40%	32%	6%
<b>Southern Gila</b>	21	41	32	6
<b>Northern Gila</b>	22	40	31	7
<b>Democrat</b>	24	33	37	6
<b>Republican</b>	21	48	28	3
<b>Indep./Other</b>	17	45	26	12
<b>Male</b>	22	44	28	6
<b>Female</b>	22	37	36	5
<b>Anglo/Caucasian</b>	22	41	32	5
<b>Minority</b>	19	39	34	8
<b>Under \$25K</b>	22	47	23	8
<b>\$25K to \$49.9K</b>	21	38	35	6
<b>\$50K and over</b>	26	38	32	4
<b>Under 35 yrs. of age</b>	36	38	20	6
<b>35 to 55 yrs. of age</b>	23	43	28	6
<b>56 to 65 yrs. of age</b>	16	35	46	3
<b>Over 65 yrs. of age</b>	18	44	31	7
<b>Employed full time</b>	25	43	26	6
<b>Employed part time</b>	15	41	33	11
<b>Retired</b>	19	39	36	6
<b>Other</b>	25	38	36	3
<b>Own home</b>	20	41	33	6
<b>Rent home</b>	37	33	23	7
<b>Attended GCC</b>	27	35	35	3
<b>Not attended GCC</b>	17	46	30	7

General Focus of Gila Community College Services: More on Academics or Recreational

The second comparison regarding curriculum involves academic instruction versus recreational and leisure classes. Those results are shown in the table on the next page.

Voters clearly prefer a strong emphasis on academic instruction compared to recreational or leisure studies. Over two-thirds say GCC's emphasis should be on academics while only one in 20 say it should be on recreational or leisure studies. About one in six say it should emphasize both.

The detailed data indicate the preference for a academic emphasis over recreational/leisure classes is broad and deep among all voter groups. In only one group (part-time employees) does the preference for academics drop below 60 percent. And in only one group (minority voters) does the preference for recreational or leisure classes rise above the 10 percent mark. The table also shows it is women, middle income voters, part-time employees and those in the 'other' employment category and those who have attended GCC are most likely to emphasize both areas of instruction.

Thus, when compared to recreational or leisure studies, it is clear voters in the county prefer academic instruction as the primary focus of GCC curriculum.

General Focus of Gila Community College Services: More on Academics or Recreational

	<i>Academics</i>	<i>Recreational/ Leisure Subjects</i>	<i>Both</i>	<i>Neither/ Not Sure</i>
<b>Gila county</b>	70%	5%	16%	9%
<b>Southern Gila</b>	68	7	18	7
<b>Northern Gila</b>	71	3	15	11
<b>Democrat</b>	64	8	19	9
<b>Republican</b>	74	3	16	7
<b>Indep./Other</b>	75	4	11	10
<b>Male</b>	71	6	11	12
<b>Female</b>	68	5	21	6
<b>Anglo/Caucasian</b>	71	4	16	9
<b>Minority</b>	61	12	16	7
<b>Under \$25K</b>	65	7	13	5
<b>\$25K to \$49.9K</b>	68	5	21	6
<b>\$50K and over</b>	79	5	12	4
<b>Under 35 yrs. of age</b>	78	8	11	3
<b>35 to 55 yrs. of age</b>	71	6	17	6
<b>56 to 65 yrs. of age</b>	68	5	18	9
<b>Over 65 yrs. of age</b>	66	2	18	14
<b>Employed full time</b>	74	8	12	6
<b>Employed part time</b>	58	4	31	7
<b>Retired</b>	67	3	16	14
<b>Other</b>	68	6	25	11
<b>Own home</b>	70	4	17	9
<b>Rent home</b>	73	10	10	7
<b>Attended GCC</b>	69	4	22	5
<b>Not attended GCC</b>	70	6	12	12



Should Gila Community College Offer Free Classes to Residents Age 55 and Over

The final issue regarding the college tested in this research was to query voters as to whether they believe GCC should offer free classes with no tuition to county residents age 55 and older. The results of this question are shown in the table on the next page.

In it we find voters, by a two to one margin, believe GCC should offer free classes with no tuition to county residents age 55 and older. Six of ten say it should and only a third say GCC should not. Less than one in ten are unsure on this issue.

The detailed data indicate half or more of all voter groups believe GCC should offer such classes to older residents. Those most likely to agree include voters in Southern Gila, Democrats, minority voters, those least affluent, younger voters and renters. Those more likely to disagree on this issue include voters in Northern Gila, Republicans and those most affluent.

In sum, the consensus is that GCC should offer free classes with no tuition to county residents age 55 and older. As noted above, the majority of all voter groups agree on this issue.

Should Gila Community College Offer Free Classes to Residents Age 55 and Over

	<i>Should</i>	<i>Should Not</i>	<i>Not Sure</i>
<b>Gila county</b>	61%	31%	8%
<b>Southern Gila</b>	70	23	7
<b>Northern Gila</b>	54	37	9
<b>Democrat</b>	68	25	7
<b>Republican</b>	56	38	6
<b>Indep./Other</b>	57	30	13
<b>Male</b>	57	32	11
<b>Female</b>	65	29	6
<b>Anglo/Caucasian</b>	60	32	8
<b>Minority</b>	70	22	8
<b>Under \$25K</b>	73	20	7
<b>\$25K to \$49.9K</b>	62	31	7
<b>\$50K and over</b>	50	41	9
<b>Under 35 yrs. of age</b>	66	31	3
<b>35 to 55 yrs. of age</b>	59	35	6
<b>56 to 65 yrs. of age</b>	62	32	6
<b>Over 65 yrs. of age</b>	61	25	14
<b>Employed full time</b>	60	35	5
<b>Employed part time</b>	62	27	11
<b>Retired</b>	60	29	11
<b>Other</b>	70	22	8
<b>Own home</b>	60	32	8
<b>Rent home</b>	66	29	5
<b>Attended GCC</b>	63	30	7
<b>Not attended GCC</b>	61	30	9

Support/Oppose Gila County Gov't. Using \$75/Yr. in Property Taxes to Address 3 Policy Issues

As we have noted, our experience is that voters respond somewhat differently to public policy initiatives once they are aware of actual out-of-pocket costs to them. Thus, we tested Gila county voter support for the three initiatives in this research given the overall cost of \$75 per year to property owners.

The results of this summary test are shown in the next table. In it we find support for the three initiatives given the total cost to property owners outpaces opposition by two to one. More specifically, 62 percent of voters support paying \$75 per year in additional property tax to pay for Gila county government taking the leading role on the issues of economic development, long-term water delivery and supply and wildfire community protection efforts. Only about a third are in opposition.

The table shows support peaks among Independents, middle income and affluent voters, younger and middle age voters, full-time employees, those in the 'other' employment category and renters. We further note support does not drop below 50 percent among most voter groups.

Opposition is registered at 31 percent overall and peaks among Republicans, minority voters, those least affluent, retirees and some older voters. We note in the table that in no group does opposition approach 50 percent and, further, in no group does opposition outpace support.

Clearly, when voters have more information about these public policy initiatives, they support paying more in property taxes to address such key concerns as economic development, water and wildfire concerns.

*Given these and all the other findings in this research, it is our strong recommendation that Gila County government consider developing these public policy initiatives into real, concrete proposals and then provide significant and substantive opportunities for public discussion of them. We believe with public input and buy-in at the beginning of such a process that there will be enhanced and strong public support for implementation.*

Support/Oppose Gila County Gov't. Using \$75/Yr. in Property Taxes to Address 3 Policy Issues

	<i>Total Support</i>	<i>Total Oppose</i>	<i>Not Sure</i>
<b>Gila county</b>	62%	31%	7%
<b>Southern Gila</b>	63	29	8
<b>Northern Gila</b>	61	32	7
<b>Democrat</b>	63	28	9
<b>Republican</b>	57	36	7
<b>Indep./Other</b>	67	28	5
<b>Male</b>	58	34	8
<b>Female</b>	65	29	6
<b>Anglo/Caucasian</b>	65	29	6
<b>Minority</b>	44	40	16
<b>Under \$25K</b>	50	41	9
<b>\$25K to \$49.9K</b>	68	25	7
<b>\$50K and over</b>	76	22	2
<b>Under 35 yrs. of age</b>	83	17	0
<b>35 to 55 yrs. of age</b>	69	26	5
<b>56 to 65 yrs. of age</b>	51	42	7
<b>Over 65 yrs. of age</b>	49	37	14
<b>Employed full time</b>	74	24	2
<b>Employed part time</b>	61	31	8
<b>Retired</b>	49	39	12
<b>Other</b>	69	22	9
<b>Own home</b>	59	33	8
<b>Rent home</b>	76	22	2
<b>Attended GCC</b>	61	32	7
<b>Not attended GCC</b>	62	31	7

### Gila County Government Services Benefit Local Areas Compared to Other Areas of the County

The final issue tested in this research was whether voters believe their local area receives services and benefits from county government disproportionately or at about the same level as other areas of the county. The results of this question are shown in the next table.

In it we find a plurality of voters believe their local areas receive fewer services and benefits from county government while slightly fewer say their area receives about the same and only a few believe their area receives more services and benefits. About one in seven are unsure.

The detailed data indicate the belief their local area receives fewer services and benefits peaks among voters in Northern Gila, Republicans, minority voters, those least affluent, middle age voters and part-time employees.

Belief their local area receives about the same level of benefits and services peaks among Independents, middle income voters, younger ones and full-time employees.

In sum, perhaps it is not surprising a plurality of voters feel their local area receives fewer benefits and services than other areas. It's interesting to note that almost as many voters, 38%, say their area receives about the same amount of services and benefits. Regardless, these data would appear to support one of our earlier findings: that it is very important for county government to communicate more with voters on key issues such as to build a more aware and informed public. In this way, consensus is built and maintained.

Gila County Government Services Benefit Local Areas Compared to Other Areas of the County

	<i>Local Area Receives More Benefits</i>	<i>Local Area Receives About Same Benefits</i>	<i>Local Area Receives Less Benefits</i>	<i>Not Sure</i>
<b>Gila county</b>	5%	38%	43%	14%
<b>Southern Gila</b>	8	41	37	14
<b>Northern Gila</b>	3	36	48	13
<b>Democrat</b>	8	39	38	15
<b>Republican</b>	2	34	50	14
<b>Indep./Other</b>	5	43	44	8
<b>Male</b>	5	34	44	17
<b>Female</b>	6	41	42	11
<b>Anglo/Caucasian</b>	6	41	41	12
<b>Minority</b>	5	22	54	19
<b>Under \$25K</b>	3	33	49	15
<b>\$25K to \$49.9K</b>	5	44	38	13
<b>\$50K and over</b>	5	39	46	10
<b>Under 35 yrs. of age</b>	0	47	41	12
<b>35 to 55 yrs. of age</b>	6	37	48	9
<b>56 to 65 yrs. of age</b>	8	42	40	10
<b>Over 65 yrs. of age</b>	6	31	41	22
<b>Employed full time</b>	5	44	44	7
<b>Employed part time</b>	0	30	63	7
<b>Retired</b>	7	34	39	20
<b>Other</b>	4	36	45	15
<b>Own home</b>	5	38	43	14
<b>Rent home</b>	7	39	42	12
<b>Attended GCC</b>	5	37	46	12
<b>Not attended GCC</b>	6	38	41	15